

# SOME HOPE AND SOME DESPAIR

3 dollars  
Later in 2005  
ISSUE 8



The Because  
The Husbands  
Liberty  
Radio 4  
Rudimentary Peni  
X-Cretas

plus some other crap...

## MY DAD IS DEAD

And while I do love that band, I just found out the other day that my Dad did in fact die.

It's been sort of weird. I wasn't very close to him. My parents split when I was 4 or 5 years old. He went born again sometime when I was in high school and we completely lost touch after that. We had just started to email recently. But I hadn't actually seen him in over a decade.

That side of the family has always been a little strange to me. I didn't get invited to the wedding when my Dad re-married. I didn't find out about my Grandfather dying until a year or so after the fact. They didn't know how to reach me when my Dad died on Thursday morning. The only reason I found out was because a friend of mine from back in high school was in my Dad's church group. He tracked me down via the J Church website. Pretty crazy.

So now I've gotta find a way to get back to Hawaii for the memorial service. It's been set for about a week and a half from now, so I have a little time to figure out how I'm gonna get there and how I'm gonna afford it. I'm thinking I should plan to go back for at least five days. Man, flights to Hawaii and a week in a hotel in the middle of summer...

Anyway, that's where I've been lately. That's why nobody has heard anything. Like I said, we weren't super close. But he was my Dad and it is fucking weird...

I keep thinking about "Pennyroyal Tea". I think that might be my favorite Nirvana song. The line "I'm so tired I can't sleep" feels like my theme. I can't sleep. Anxiety. Stress. Sorta tired of talking about my Dad's death. But not really bothered either. I'm really dreading going back to Hawaii for the services... It's like I've got a final exam in the next two weeks. I've skipped class all semester and now I'm cramming...

Anyway, here's a picture of me and Yuka from the Because in our matching I Excuse shirts.





## 2004 "SOCIETY IS A CARNIVOROUS FLOWER" TOUR DIARY

MARCH 29<sup>th</sup> – FT. WORTH (1919 Hempill)

These weird little spaces are everywhere nowadays. Downstairs is where the kids hang out and goof around and upstairs is where the bands play in a big open wooden room. I think people lived up there too. I haven't been to Ft. Worth in years and years. I think the last time I was here was on our first US tour. What happened to that hippie with the amazing homemade pita bread? Thought Riot opened tonight. I'd never heard of them. But they were cool. Really nice guys too. Friendly for a band that I later found out were sort of a big deal. It was our first night of tour so like normal we left very, very late. Chris drove like a maniac and we made it from Austin to Ft. Worth in something like two and a half hours.

MARCH 30<sup>th</sup> – OKLAHOMA CITY (Green Door)

Nobody came out tonight. In fact, we weren't in the ad in the paper. No flyers. Blah, blah, blah. Hey, I'm sick of hearing bands whine about poor promotion too. With nobody in the house except the born again Christian punks who must have been very confused, we turned it up to 11 and blasted through the Cars' song "Just What I



Needed". Probably the only time we'll ever play that live.

MARCH 31<sup>st</sup> – LAWRENCE

I don't remember the name of this little place. But we've been here before. It's mostly just a little bar with a ton of pinball machines. This is our first show with the amazing Riverboat Gamblers along with their touring partners The Wednesday. Everyone was in a rush, so there wasn't much time to hang out. There's a part of me that wishes we could conquer this part of the country. So we keep coming back to lukewarm welcomes at best. It's funny how we really are at the mercy of these towns. Any of the bands playing tonight could headline in Chicago or New York or San Francisco.

But tonight, all three of us are playing to about 30 kids who don't seem to be having that good of a time. We just need to try harder.

APRIL 1<sup>st</sup> – KANSAS CITY (El Torreon)

This is a pretty nifty little venue. Too big for a band like us, but the guy running the place was really cool and on the level. J Church and Dysrhythmia is definitely a strange coupling. But it was cool and I sort of enjoyed their prog/metal. That might have been the context of being on tour and needing to hear something other than the two-dozen CDs you brought. Desperately trying to get some Mexican food as we sped out of town, we ran into the opening screamo band James Dean Trio. I just assumed they hated us and what we were doing. That was our experience playing with screamo bands last time we were in Boston. But they turned out to be pretty nice and stoked about the whole show.

APRIL 2<sup>nd</sup> – ROCKFORD

We played at this fucking skate park years ago when it was still under construction. What a nightmare! You have to load your gear up a skate ramp with no steps. You play to a shitload of bored teens. The other bands are shitty local hippy jam bands and some Dashboard bullshit rip-off. Plus, this town sucks! There's nothing to do and nowhere to go. You can't escape the shitty music. I don't care if Cheap Trick is from here. Rockford sucks!

APRIL 3<sup>rd</sup> – CHICAGO (Fireside Bowl)

Matinees are weird. I don't really like 'em. I know that there is this whole mystique with all-ages, hardcore matinees. I just find them to be awkward and too well lit. I'm pretty self-conscious and need to hide in the dark. Plus, we're not a hardcore band and, as people keep reminding us, we're not really an all-ages band. I find it hard to believe that people under 21 can't like what we're doing. But I'm old. What do I know?

Met the Methadones for the first time. Thank God they're good. We're doing most of the rest of the tour with them and it would have been a bummer if they sucked.

APRIL 4<sup>th</sup> – MINNEAPOLIS (Triple Rock)

Everybody loves this place, so I don't need to tell you about it. Pugged out and felt like I was in no position to play. Tore through our set at lightening speed. You've gotta do something to plant your flag when up against Riverside Gamblers, The

Wednesdays and the amazing Sweet J.A.P. Tonight was all about bands going crazy, breaking guitars, jumping off ledges. Afterwards, we all headed back to Paddy's Pad for drinks and a shit talking session.

APRIL 5<sup>th</sup> – DES MOINES (Vaudeville Mews)

The funniest, sloppiest opening band of all time tonight. I don't know what was going on, but they surely wanted to be raging against whatever machines they could. With their delivery I'm guessing small toasters and maybe a bed lamp. Got to finally meet the folks from Spank Zine. It was fun, but I don't really think we ever need to go back.

**APRIL 6<sup>th</sup> – IOWA CITY (Gabe's Oasis)**

Oasis from what? We had some time, as there really isn't much to do between Des Moines and Iowa City so we went and saw "Dawn Of The Dead". I like Sarah Polley a lot. She should be doing better things. After tonight's show, I was thinking the same about myself. Of the few kids that were there, two of them told us that they had a J Church cover band. When they played at this same venue there were ten times as many people. What the hell? Aren't we the ultimate J Church cover band?

**APRIL 7<sup>th</sup> – MILWAUKEE (Mad Planet)**

Another matinee and this time at some sort of goth club. At least this time the show was good. It's finally feeling like a tour and not so much like doing sociological research. A bunch of kids rocking. It's not packed. But it's enough. Great Methadones set tonight. What a great singer Dan is. Got to chill out with Karoline and Robert after the show. I can't remember the name of their bar, but the food kicks ass. Lovely house too. I'd almost want to move there.

**APRIL 8<sup>th</sup> – CLEVELAND (Pirates Cove)**

I used to love Cleveland. We used to have the best shows here. Everything has been downhill since the demise of Speak-in Tongues. This show was fine. There was a bunch of people. It's just not the same. It was just another club show for us. Back in the old days, it was such a cool city to hit that we would go out of our way to make it happen. I don't know if Ohio is interested in us anymore.

**APRIL 9<sup>th</sup> – PITTSBURGH (Mr. Robotto)**

Back to reality. This is our kind of venue with our kind of people. Rockin' show better than the last time we made it through here. Hit Me Back and Suburban Death Machine also rocked. I can't remember, but I think one of the bands was from Mexico or South America or something. Now I feel pretty ignorant. Maybe I am becoming a Texan? Mr. Robotto is the quintessential American DIY venue. I'm not sure how they survive. But they make touring the East Coast worthwhile. We tried out our Crucifix cover tonight to positive results.

**APRIL 10<sup>th</sup> – WILKES BARRE (Metropolis)**

I've never heard of this town. We spent a big part of the day driving around rural Pennsylvania with the wrong address looking at scary abandoned industrial buildings and even scarier white trash residential neighborhoods. Finally got to the venue that was next door to a burned out building. Turned out to be a pretty cool little all ages venue. I don't know what these kids were about. I wound up talking to one kid about Fernando Arrabal, which kinda blew my mind, as I don't even know much about the guy. I'm guessing there's some sort of university just out of sight that we're not noticing.

**APRIL 11<sup>th</sup> – NEW YORK (Knitting Factory)**

I really like New York and this is one of the only places I like playing. I know a lot of other people hate it here. The stage is too high as is the door price. But we've had so many bad experiences with this city, I don't know if there are any real alternatives for us. Maybe I'm just caught up in the mystique of it all. Anyway, it's Easter, which I

don't really care about, so it's not really that crowded. The show was filmed for something. I don't remember what. It's just another thing that I agreed to that I'll never hear about again.

**APRIL 12<sup>th</sup> – PROVIDENCE (The Living Room)**

We're getting really good at getting lost. Spent most of the day driving around suburban Providence. I think this is a metaphor for this whole tour. We're just a little out of synch. Here we are out on tour promoting a record that isn't out yet. We are a little unsure of every step. I don't have any confidence in what is happening. We used to just be able to drive and know where the venue was, almost instinctively. Now we're getting lost every other day. The rain isn't helping anything.

**APRIL 13<sup>th</sup> – NEW YORK (Northsix)**

This is the second time we've played here and for the second time it's felt like we're living beyond our means. We always wind up playing on weekdays in New York. So the shows are never as big as they could be. Clubs like this can especially make you feel self-



conscious when the room is half full. Still, there are a lot of nice people here and I love Brooklyn. I hope we move here at some stage.

**APRIL 14<sup>th</sup> – PHILADELPHIA (First Unitarian Church)**

Got some quasi-Ethiopian food with Mike McKee before the show. One of his new bands, Armalite, played tonight. A lot like Fuel or a more upbeat and melodic version of Hoover. Totally great, they're probably the best band we've seen on this trip. I hope they keep playing. All in all, this might be my favorite show of the tour. The venue was cool. Loads of people selling records and shit. Played with cool bands. This is the kind of show you hope for every night when the tour starts and by the end you're lucky if you had half a dozen of them.

**APRIL 15<sup>th</sup> – RALEIGH (The King's Barcade)**

Wow. It's really empty tonight. A hell of a lot of people paid and came in and then just stayed in the bar area. It was weird. The whole town is like a ghost town. Then all of a sudden it was like the yuppie bus pulled up and they all poured into the bar, had a drink, and left. Actually, most of them left before the band started. Mental note:

they don't like us in Raleigh.

#### APRIL 16<sup>th</sup> – COLUMBIA (New Brookland Tavern)

We're back. Playing with some emo bands tonight. Everyone has their regional emo stars nowadays. It's sort of like how every town had its local Stevie Ray Vaughn for a while. It was a fun set tonight. We had been talking about old hardcore songs with ironic/maniacal laughs like "Uni High Beef Rag". The result was a sad sounding cackle on my part during the break in "Terror or Love". Inside jokes make tour more tolerable.

#### APRIL 17<sup>th</sup> – ATLANTA (Drunken Unicorn)

Really cool venue, but I blew it tonight. My left ear was fucking up again as it does from time to time. I couldn't hear at all out of it tonight. I couldn't hit a correct note if my life depended on it. To make matters worse, a multi-camera, multi-track recording was made of tonight's show. I really sucked. As a result, I was in a pretty shit mood. Too bad, 'cos this is a really cool venue. Mmm, Soul Veg is here. One of my favorite places to eat in the world.

#### APRIL 18<sup>th</sup> – GAINESVILLE (Common Grounds)

Visiting Var and crew and No Idea is a lot of fun. I keep thinking that they'll have a Bitchin' shirt in a large. Never gonna happen. Walking around here reminds me of hanging out in Olympia. Go visit KRS. Maybe visit K. Walk up and down the one drag back and forth. Nice silk-screened posters for tonight's show that includes Grabass. I'm sweating like a pig. Like every band that comes through, dinner consists of balls of pizza dough dipped in marinara.

#### APRIL 19<sup>th</sup> – TAMPA (Orpheum)

We got here really early. Walked around the little drag. We had a great show here with Propagandhi and Avail a few years back. I don't remember the name of that venue. I think it's where I first met Christy Road of Green Zine. David and I went to see "Kill Bill vol. 2". I had already seen it at a special Austin screening that included Tarantino, his producer, Robert Rodriguez, and 500 of the biggest nerds in the city. But it's fun to see movies on tour. The show here was great. Claimel guys were around with a new band called Vaginasore Jr. It was a really good time. The venue was nice with a good stage, nice bar and a really nice guy promoting the shows. Met up with the A.D.D. guys again who gave me a video of J Church from our first U.S. tour. God, I was so young and thin back then.

#### APRIL 20<sup>th</sup> – PENSACOLA (Handle Bar)

The people who run this place are really nice. But I swear, I've been coming here for years and have never had a decent show. It could be psychosomatic as I'm usually almost home at this point. I wanna go home! My pal Jessy wasn't around. Even the shitty Chinese restaurant that Jug and I ate at last year is gone.

#### APRIL 21<sup>st</sup> – BATON ROUGE (Rotolo's Pizza)

Worst show of the tour in many ways. God, the woman putting on this show was such a moron. Her name was Rachel Rockstar, which I think speaks volumes. We wanted to just play in New Orleans. In fact, in past tours we often just drive straight home from Florida. But we went out of our way to play Baton Rouge for \$200. Of course, the show was a waste and the only people there who even knew who we were drove up from New Orleans. Then the woman didn't have our guarantee. I mean, we never ask for a guarantee unless dealing with some asshole club type situation. Even then, we would rather not play those places. What part of the word "guarantee" don't these people understand? Either way, I don't plan to ever go back to that little town.

#### APRIL 22<sup>nd</sup> – AUSTIN (Emo's)

Another homecoming anti-climax. It didn't help that we were supposed to be in Houston tonight and things got changed around at the last minute. Nobody I know showed up since I had kept announcing the wrong date. Anyway, it's good to be home.

*PICS: The Methadones, Ben smokes weed out of a hot dog...*

## 2004 "SOCIETE EST UNE FLEUR CARNIVORE" EUROPEAN TOUR DIARY

#### NOVEMBER 12<sup>th</sup> – ARRIVAL

Lots of apprehension as we show up at Austin Bergstrom in the wee hours. My old friend Chris from Travis Cut has dropped the ball on sorting out our work papers. Historically, we're not the luckiest band when it comes to border crossing.

We encounter our first problem in Chicago. It turns out that in the last minute booking of our flights, David is on a different plane and won't be touching down in London until the following day. Dave's a good guy. He's our pal. But if I had to choose one member to travel on their own through immigration and customs, he would be my last choice by a mile.

10:30 PM London Time. Ben, Chris and I whiz past immigration and customs. After an £80 ride with a racist taxi driver, we are at Sean and Ben's flat in South London. Some gossip, some power pop, "The Office" Christmas Special... Next thing I know its morning and we're making our way to the Gipsy Rose Café for bean on bubble and squeak. We spend most of the day watching Arsenal smack Tottenham in the highest scoring match I'd ever seen. Expecting a call from David at any moment, we instead get a call from Graham who runs our website. He got a call from immigration saying they had detained David and were not sure about letting him through. Aside from this being a huge problem for David, all immigration would have to do would be Google "J Church Tour", find our first show and deport us all. Young bands, never underestimate how dangerous it can be crossing borders with a load of gear and merch and no papers. After a few hours of nail biting, we get the call: David is through.

#### NOVEMBER 14<sup>th</sup> – EXETER (Cavern)

We meet our first driver, Eike, in the morning. She's tired from driving to London from Germany or somewhere. She seems pretty cool. We've had some bad luck with drivers in the past. I bit a guy once for trying to strangle me, but that's another story. Anyway, Eike seems pretty nice. She's from the clan in Hamburg that I hold near and dear to my heart.

Sunday night in Exeter and this gig is a quaint affair. It's just as well as we're fighting with the rental gear and jet lag. This is the first of a couple of gigs with Reno Divorce. I'd never heard of 'em. But they were nice guys. They do that Social D meets Rocket meets Rev. Horton Heat meets neck tattoos kind of thing. Their cover of "Ace of Spades" led us all to write "The Joker" in Sharpie on our hands as not to forget. "Toilet Paper, Milk, The Joker..." Exeter is Annalise country, so I got a cope of the new recording, which is amazing as usual.

#### NOVEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> – LEEDS (Packhorse)

We are live at Leeds so we had to do "Parkas and Flags". Montreal's Sainte Catherine played tonight and is even more powerful than the last time. This gig was set up by The Collective as Becky and Dave Crackle don't do gigs anymore. In fact, they don't even make it to the gig as it seems they have a baby on the way. As Sean says, "Dave did a fuck."

#### NOVEMBER 16<sup>th</sup> – LONDON (Brixton Windmill)

London is usually a lot of fun but mostly because there are a lot of people I want to hang out with here. The gigs, I dunno, it's like any big city that sees too many bands. It's a lot of jaded sound guys and half-assed promoters. The Windmill is tiny. But people are up for it and we get to see some old friends. The sound is rubbish. This time it might be us still not really getting along with our rented gear. This is our second and last gig with Reno Divorce. Last we see of them, they are wandering off into the night with a big bag of mushrooms.

At the gig we find out that there are no work papers. Not sure what happened with Chris who was meant to sort them out. The result is we have to cancel the next two days in Ireland and Northern Ireland. With the trouble Dave's already been in, we can't risk leaving and re-entering England without papers. It sucks to miss those gigs. But there are worse things than having two days off in London. In fact, by not paying for the Ferry or work papers we wound up saving a few hundred pounds. Still, I would have wanted to spend it if it meant getting to play in Belfast again.

#### NOVEMBER 17<sup>th</sup> – OFF

Went and visited everyone down at Rough Trade on Talbot. I spent the rest of the day shopping for records, most of my time and money dedicated to Record and Tape Exchange. God, I miss living in a city with loads of great record shops. I hate Ebay more and more every day.



#### NOVEMBER 18<sup>th</sup> – OFF

Christy Colcort showed up today! I hadn't seen her in years. Got to meet her new guy, James, who seems cool. We caught up on some gossip and the potential death of the video store she part owns that I worked at. It's the end of days for video stores and record shops. Don't know what I'm going to do with myself.

Everyone is off on their own devices. Ben and Eike are doing what often happens in these situations. They're drug buddies at the moment so with all this down time they become make-out buddies too. She's cool. I think he's the only unattached member of the band. There's really nothing else to do at the moment.

#### NOVEMBER 19<sup>th</sup> – LIVERPOOL (Heaven And Hell)

Back on the road, we bring our sloppy little music and fruit stand to "scary" Liverpool. Seems like every other band gets their gear stolen here. But I've really only had the nicest times. It's cold and wet but I like that. I like the subterranean feel of the clubs and the bad cuisine.

The gig is sort of so-so no fault of the promoters. It sounds like it wasn't confirmed until the last minute and they weren't able to do any real advertising. I guess our pal Chris did a pretty half assed job on this tour. Now I remember him sending a fax to Sean saying something like "I'm fucked off with this."

At any rate, the gig is fun if not only for the opening bands that are a lot of fun. The Unhealthy play some classic '80s thrash. Flamingo

50 are totally fantastic. Three-piece power pop, a spastic guitarist with a great, unusual voice fronts the band with a natural feel for melody. I can't believe I had never heard of them.

#### NOVEMBER 20<sup>th</sup> – HIGH WYCOMBE (Roundabout)

I never really found out why we skipped Manchester and Glasgow on this trip. Seems a shame as I love those cities and I don't remember ever having bad nights there. Instead it's down to High Wycombe for a fun but tiny little gig. We were back with Sainte Catherines here as well as some new Crackle band and Mac from Travis Cut's new thing.

Spent most of the late night hanging out with the French Canadians listening to Billy Joel and Ice T's Body Count.

#### NOVEMBER 21<sup>st</sup> – LEICESTER (Charlotte)

This one was a bona fide dud. It's our second time here the last time being around 1996 with Philly's F.O.D. Tonight it was ripping through the set to an empty room. The few that were there were into it, so we actually tore into one of our best, energetic sets. It's funny how we play considerably better in the face of adversity. Normal shows? We turn into automatons. Fifteen kids show up? We're actually pretty good.

#### NOVEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup> – BRIGHTON (Free Butt)

Actually, the gig got moved to somewhere that wasn't the Free Butt. Some place over a pub that I don't remember the name of.

Brighton is a great town. I love the food and the boardwalk. Gigs are always cool here too. Tonight is no exception with a packed out tiny room. It was a happy way to end a stressful time in England.

We picked up Ingo, who booked the tour. He's going to take over most of the driving on the continent. He's a cool guy. He used to be in But Alive but now does tours for a lot of different bands including a lot of the No Idea groups. He's my age, which is a relief.

#### NOVEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup> – LILLE, France

I feel sorry for the local openers. They get a couple of songs off before the PA Pepe Le Poop's out. We wait with Sainte Catherine's for two hours until they find a replacement. The show must go on! By the end of the night I'm feeling pretty sick. We stay with some kids who live nearby. It's a little like a frat house. I need to get out so I decide to sleep in the van. I walk the empty streets for a couple of hours to clear my head. I figured I might be feeling sick from all the cigarette smoke.

#### NOVEMBER 24<sup>th</sup> – LILLE, France (Urban Chaos)

I was deliriously sick all day. I didn't eat anything and just slept in the van. When I get sick on the road, sometimes 16 hours of sleep cures me. Other times, it makes it far worse. This was to be the first of two days off. But Frenchy punker pub, Urban Chaos, said we could play with Sainte Catherines. I was really, really sick and don't remember a thing.

#### NOVEMBER 25<sup>th</sup> – POITIERS, France (off)

So, so, so sick. Sleep. No food. Fever. I guess we were supposed to play tonight with Sainte Catherines. No way was that gonna happen.

#### NOVEMBER 26<sup>th</sup> – BORDEAUX, France (Local Universel)

So sick. So totally sick. Still, this is the first show to feel like a European tour. A big ass squat, veggie chili and giant, overzealous squatter dogs everywhere you look. Christophe from the great Stonehenge records set up the gig. He's a cool guy but I was far too sick to hang out. I spend a lot of time considering how sickness,



overexertion and the freezing weather is affecting my health. I cough myself to sleep in a dark funk.

**NOVEMBER 27<sup>th</sup> – LYON, France (Ground Zero)**

The stressful, ridden with illness, French leg ends with an amazing show. Ground Zero is packed and both bands go down storming. I'm so sick I have a hard time enjoying any of it. But it still feels good finishing on a high and the promoter, Muriel, is very sweet. After a ridiculously long walk in the freezing cold, both bands crash out at her flat and she gives me a cool Cringer silk screen she had made years ago.

Tonight was our last show of the tour with David playing guitar. He could only do the first part as he's got work and school obligations he can't get out of. This is gonna be a problem at some point. He catches a ride with some kids after we play to the airport so the last time I see him is onstage.

**NOVEMBER 28<sup>th</sup> – MILAN, Italy (Leon Cavallo)**

I haven't been here in years. God, I love the food here. Vats of pasta cooked perfect with an awesome sauce. I love it more than the pizza here.

The gig is great as are the opening band that I think are called the Manges. They're one of the bands on Stardumb, which is a pretty solid label. We were supposed to do something for them at one point, but fucked it up somehow. Some mean people say that Stardumb is the best American punk label in Europe. But they've got their own identity. Especially once you see a band like the Manges or the Apers, you know they don't at all sound American.

Sometimes I feel that even big receptive audiences don't really get what we're doing. So few Americans get what bands like us are about, it's hard to imagine people who don't speak English as a first language can relate. But tonight was great. People weren't here just to be entertained by the jumping American chimps.

**NOVEMBER 29<sup>th</sup> – VIAREGGIO, Italy (Matilda)**

You know how truck stop food in most countries kind of sucks? Not in Italy! You can get pasta with a sauce and good olive oil on all the tables for three Euros.

Even better, tonight's show is in a really nice restaurant where we eat like kings. Another great Italian gig with a cool crowd, it didn't take us long to hit our stride as a trio. Might even sound better on some songs. The kid doing the show made a projected J Church with Power Point, which was kind of embarrassing though well intentioned. Ah, it was cool. Another great Stardumb related band played with us tonight. The Waukees are a mix of catchy garage and pop punk with a good dose of covers. They were pretty nice kids.

Ben is starting to suffer from his inability to score with the ladies of Europe. In response, he gets really loaded lashing out saying, "Italy is racist!" Later on, he'll think it's as funny as the rest of us do.

**NOVEMBER 30<sup>th</sup> – TORINO, Italy (Antidox)**

Sounds like the El Paso squat where we usually play is having some major problems. Unfortunately, we play the Antidox club instead. It's a cool place. It's just a little big for us. Tonight is half full, echoing and boring.

Haymarket Riot opened. I'd never seen or met them before. Kinda reminded me of Tar in a lot of ways. I guess I was expecting something a bit more anarcho with that sort of name.

The great Frontiera also played. I've been a fan since the '80s when they were called Kina. Great melodic

Italian punk, I was as much a fan of them as I was of Negazione, CCM and Indigesti. If you don't know either band, everything has been reissued and is well worth tracking down.

**DECEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> – BOLOGNA, Italy (Atlantide)**

Went to the Magma Anarchist Collective before the show. Met some cool people and got some cool posters.

I felt a little bad about this show. I just couldn't get it together. It was just one of those shows where I couldn't play right. I felt weirdly limited and completely frustrated. We didn't do an encore despite the great crowd and I felt like a jerk. Maybe I'm still having a hard time with the final days of my illness. Maybe I just haven't had enough sleep these last few days. I could just feel myself out of step the whole night and not playing at full capacity. It's an infuriating feeling.

**DECEMBER 2<sup>nd</sup> – UDINE, Italy (Voltumo)**

I've always wanted to get to this squat and we did it just in time. Sounds like this was their last show before the place was torn down. It's a fuckin' shame when yet another old squat runs out of time. Another great meal, the squat makes their own olive oil and a great fruit juice of grapes and honey. It's like something the Zeus would drink.

**DECEMBER 3<sup>rd</sup> – ZAGREB, Croatia (KSET)**

I love it here. Maybe the best gig of the tour. A great turnout that went made for it and the sound was amazing (which is not typical for Europe). Later that night we all went drinking at an after hours punk bar called Spunk. The singer for Analena asked me what spunk meant. She was so nice; I didn't want to tell her.

**DECEMBER 4<sup>th</sup> – BUDAPEST, Hungary (Marco Polo)**

Budapest was a lot dirtier than I was expecting. It could be just where we were. It could be that we arrived as the sun was going down and the dark colors of the looming buildings seemed almost baroque and asleep. There's nothing wrong with a little dirt. New York City is sorta disgusting but still might be the most alluring city in the States. Hong Kong is worse but I can't get enough of it. Budapest is dirty. I wish I had the time to really explore.

This was sort of a small, subdued show. But it's our first time here and they were into it I think. Maybe not. Maybe they're just really polite here. I've got no reason to think otherwise.

Great late night Turkish dinner with the promoters Balazs and Edith. Balazs and I like a lot of similar music like Han Bennink, Susie Ibarra, etc. I would love to do some further trading with him...



DECEMBER 5<sup>th</sup> – PRAGUE, Czech Republic (007)

This one was a bit of a disappointment. Small crowd again, which is okay. But it's a bummer when even the few people that show up don't seem to be enjoying the show. Two nights in a row this happens and two nights in a row we get an encore. What does that mean? Encores have become this strange social contract. If you're a band like us and you don't completely offend the audience, you get an encore.

007 is a really cool club that was a real underground punk spot under communism. Our show as set up by a cool ex-pat named Marika. She's your basic Frisco stoner who hung out with groups like Bomb. A Nightbreak / Chameleon type of person. What was the Chameleon called before it changed it's name?

In fact, the whole audience seems to be ex-pats in one form or another. Of all the people we spoke to after our set, I don't think I met a single Czech. I haven't seen this many Americans since Austin.

DECEMBER 6<sup>th</sup> – PRAGUE, Czech Republic (off)

Today was our day off and my throat is still fucked. Everyone else went to see some cathedral made of bones. I sat in and just tried to get better. I strolled around the city square looking at the Christmas markets. Mundane items like candles come off as charming in another country. Maybe I'm just a moron.



DECEMBER 7<sup>th</sup> – DRESDEN, Germany (AZ Conni)

It's nice to break free from the unbearable lightness of being in Prague. Tonight we were reunited with Sainte Catherines and it was a relief to speak in English to someone new even with their funny accents (ha ha, ugh...).

We pick up two more Canadians here, Winnipeggers Jo and James are joining us for most of the rest of the tour. They're working on some project about squatting and punk. Something like that. I don't know. Whatever. They're friends with Propagandhi so they're good with me. Ben was right in describing them as the "Blair Witch Project".

They're cool and we need new blood.

When Sainte Catherines starts there are three people there. So they're being silly jumping around and posing out. It's a funny joke set for the most part. Little do they know, the club starts filling up. They notice in time to play their last song seriously.

DECEMBER 8 – LEIPZIG, Germany (Conne Island)

After all the hype, this was a major letdown with only about 30 people showing up. It's fucking freezing and there's really nowhere to go. We probably should have played at the local squat. But I guess some folks thought this was gonna be a big show. Oops.

Best part was that we stayed with Robert from Zann and his girlfriend and they had a super cool place with "The Family Guy" on DVD. I really hate weekday shows. But Robert is cool and I'm glad to meet him. It's weird how oddballs have become cool in this really under-the-radar network. It's even weirder that you can completely relate to someone in Leipzig without knowing anything about them beforehand.

DECEMBER 9 – BRAUNSCHWEIG, Germany (B58)

Before our show, we got a tour of the beautiful Nexus with Mausel. It's a work in progress but promises to be one of the coolest spots in Germany.

The venue we're at is cool too and it's our last with Sainte Catherines. It's a shame we're not doing the rest of the tour together as I really dig these guys.

For the first time on this tour there is a real hassle with an opening band. Some group from the states called Swearing At Motorists came and were trying to pull some bullshit. They were trying to force Sainte Catherines to play first so they could play second. They were also complaining about the drinks not being cold enough, no pot and no hotel rooms. No wonder everyone hates Americans.

The gig was a little bit of redemption as we played alright and the crowd was up for it. Some kids wanted me to play "Reaching For Thoreau", an acoustic song. I couldn't remember the words, so they went home and typed them up for me.

Back in Zagreb, I got sick after the show and barfed everywhere out by the van. I assumed it was good poisoning. But it happened again tonight. What's going on? We got done playing and during the last song I could feel the warm saliva and that choking sensation in the back of my throat. As soon as we were done, I had to run for the toilet where I heaved for a few minutes.

DECEMBER 10 – HAMBURG, Germany (Stortebeker)

I love this place. It's our third time here and it's always intense. It's Ingo's homecoming so he's glowing. The show is great with a fantastic opening band from Frankfurt called Confused. I don't really know how to describe them. Maybe Black Flag and Dead Guy and Silverfish?

Ben was hoping to rekindle his brief romance with Eike. But she put the kibosh on that, so he was on the A-train to Shiftfaced, as they say. I don't blame him. It was one of the last things he was really looking forward to on the tour. Still, there are a lot of other beautiful women at the gig. Me, I finally found a phone card to call China and hear Liberty's voice for the first time since Brighton. Now I'm sad. It's a fight not to get into the mindset where I'm counting the days until I'm home. Shit, she won't even be there.

Jo and Ben are wasted. James and I are cracking up I the backseat



as we all start quoting "Suburbia", me and Chris singing the theme music a cappella. I guess it's one of those rituals punk bands have to go through at some point. We all laugh, but I actually like that movie.

#### DECEMBER 11 – ALBORG, Denmark (1000 Fryd)

In the morning it's breakfast back at the Stort. We meet our third driver, Sasha and say goodbye to Eike, Ingo and the Shtainer who is one of the constants for me in Hamburg. I remember him from back when Cringer came over. He's a serious guy until you get a few mugs of wine in him.

As we cross into Denmark I can't help but buy an insane children's book with people dressed as animals decorating fake stones to look like little creatures. I can't explain it any other way. It just feels quintessentially Western European.

1000 Fryd is a cool old place. They still have a poster up from when I played here 13 years ago with Cringer. The picture doesn't even look like me. I used to be sorta cute.

The show was small but fun. I guess that's kind of the nature of this place. Peter, who was the main promoter, is a really cool guy. Nobody knows about J Church in Denmark. But he still likes to bring in any DIY band he can. He must eat shit financially most of the time. I finally score the Gorilla Angreb 7" I've been looking for.

A couple of interesting opening bands: The Very Job Agency are playing these two shows with us. Sorta catchy punk that feels very German and almost arty. I wouldn't call it a stereotype. More of the nature of their aesthetic as Crass would say. Nice guys, they're selling amazing buttons mostly of bands but also of TV shows like "Simon And Simon" and "The Fall Guy".

The Je Ne Sais Quoi is a great band mixing post-punk, no wave, etc. into an interesting hybrid. Very catchy, they keyboard player was in Trapdoor Fucking Unit. I've got to track down their music. They are very, very startling and impressive. This is one of the moments on tour you savor, as you really can't be sure that you'll ever see these people again.

#### DECEMBER 12th – HANNOVER, Germany (Korn)

By far our worst show here, not many people turned out, 30 or so maybe? The only really high point was I got to see my pal Julia Strechel if only briefly as she was pretty ill. Still, glad to have made contact. I miss the good old days staying at her flat on the top floor. That's just one of those moments in time you can never relive.

#### DECEMBER 13th – HAMBURG, Germany (off)

I like Hamburg. It's easy to kill time here and be amused by whatever. It's like the good old days in pre-Giuliani New York. Sort of. Maybe nothing was that sleazy. Did a little more record shopping. Scored a German Eric Dolphy LP. Nothing to do tonight in Ingo's hometown. We go out looking for some foosball. I buy some marzipan to take home. Fuck, it's cold here.

#### DECEMBER 14th – OLDENBURG, Germany (Alhambra)

Got our new, somewhat smaller van and headed off for Oldenburg with Sasha behind the wheel. He seems like a pretty cool guy.

The Alhambra is a cool space started by a bunch of lefty professors in the '70s. I don't know the whole story. But I know that there is a cool apartment and computer center for women as part of the space. This is our second time here, the first being in '95. Once again there is an interesting German band that I really don't know how to describe. They're called Mad Minority. Not really hardcore but not typically punk either, they're definitely not metal. It's more of the unique German punk, growl, hybrid that I associate with things like Trust fanzine in the late '80s and early '90s. Nice guys too.

Turns out to be a great show, which is a huge relief. We spend the

night telling ghost stories in the creepy band room where we are meant to sleep. Jo is afraid of everything. The movie "Maximum Overdrive" freaked her out.

#### DECEMBER 15th – DORTMUND, Germany (JUZ)

Another town I've heard of but have never been to. Joachim is there with some folks from Ox fanzine, which is probably the best German zine along with Trust.

Playing tonight with an enjoyable local ska band that I would have assumed were metal just by looking at them. Another fun night as we seem to be hitting areas much more familiar with us. It feels like a fun hall show in the Midwest with us playing right on the floor.

It's Jo's last night with us so she is on the A Train to Shitfaced. By the time we're done playing she is sloppy drunk and hilarious. I'm gonna miss her company. Having a girl as part of the entourage always drastically changes the atmosphere for the better. I just hate when it feels like "lads night out".

#### DECEMBER 16th – SAARLOUIS, Germany (JUZ)

I guess Saarlouis was a French town. After the occupation they were given a choice between going back to French or staying German. They voted for German.

Another youth center, which is a weird government, funded ugly building called JUZ. It's a place for kids to hang out and they also do regular gigs all sponsored by tax dollars.

The show itself turned out crappy as no one there really new how to work the PA. So vocals were intermittent at best. A shame as people stuck around through a German emo band and a hilarious German hip-hop group.

God, this place is a mess. There is junk and cigarettes everywhere. The whole place stinks of beer and smoke.



#### DECEMBER 17<sup>th</sup> – NURNBERG, Germany (K4)

Tonight was hilarious. First off, my pal Urte set up the gig so I knew we would at least have fun. K4 is in a great old building that had been meeting place for the Nazis and was later converted into Germany's first autonomous center. Now it's an art space with many stories and rooms for painting, sculpture, music, whatever.

We play with a great Euro old school hardcore band called Anti-Control. Real cool guys and totally refreshing. Our set is great. Ben thinks it might even be better than Zagreb. In the meantime, his blue-balls saga continues. Working his way through many 6.5% beers, he starts to flirt with one of the hottest punk girls at the show. When he starts to make his move she says, "don't do that", which is funny now. But at the time it put Ben on the A Train.

In the meantime, the DJ starts playing awesome new wave and the pogo punk (I swear) start to limbo. It evolves into an all night dance party with everything from the Housemartins to the Epoxies blasting.

At some point Ben disappears. A good 15 beers and he has cracked. Walking to Urte's place he starts kicking all the cars yelling "what are they gonna do!?! Kick me out of Germany!?! I hop they do!! I'm sick of Germany!! I wanna go home!! I'm sick of Lance and Chris and Sasha and James!!!"

James, who can't stop laughing, asks, "Ben, do you need a puppy?" Ben, "Yeah, for me to kick!" Urte, "You need to be quiet 'cos there's a baby..." Ben, "I'll kick the baby!"

It went on like this for an hour, which was all pretty funny. We all knew he was drunk and just needed to let off steam after being away from home for so long.

#### DECEMBER 18<sup>th</sup> – MUNICH, Germany (Kafe Kult)

Who doesn't love the great human sobriety safety net? Ben didn't remember much this morning. He didn't even remember barfing between two cars outside of Urte's place.

I get a copy of "More Than Music?" photozine from Urte. There's a great photo from the last show of our last Euro tour with all the gear knocked over with Andee lying on a pile of drums.

I swear I've been to Kafe Kult before. It seems so familiar. It's a crazy old building that was a Nazi hospital in it's former incarnation. This place has got to be haunted. We even found a scary 6" spider in the room we were to sleep in.

The show is excellent with good sets by Purden and Jakov Goodnight. People are throwing confetti during our set and we get two encores that actually feel sort of deserved. Some guy told me it was his favorite show in 10 years! I met this cool girl named Nine from Scotland. Not only does she know my friend Gordon back in Frisco, but also she tried to see us in Belfast. I felt really bad about that. Hopefully we will stay in touch.

#### DECEMBER 19<sup>th</sup> – FREIBURG, Germany (Kiel)

Last night was my crazy tour dream. We had gone to an old abandoned theater to score some drugs. Turns out the guy we're scoring from is Atom from Atom and His Package. But he's a tough guy pushing me around. So, I pull out a gun and point it at him. He says, "you think I'm fucking scared?!? I've had a lot of fucking guns pointed at me and you don't look like..." Before he can finish I start shooting. He runs off and I chase him. He makes a wrong turn and is face to face with me. I shoot him in the head. Suddenly we are surrounded by a hundred dark figures. A skinny

woman with a bob and horned rims takes me by the arm as we are all led to a room. I ask her, "am I ready?" She says, "of course you are." The room is a small dark chamber with no floor and I slowly float down until I wake up.

It snowed last night. The graffiti, beer bottles and tour van all look beautiful in the virgin snow. We eat breakfast to the sounds of Coltrane and Dophy. This from the same guy who was playing Kraftwerk on reel to reel the night before.

K.T.S. is a cool little squat with a nicer band room and an info center. The stage has a massive heater that nearly gave me a stroke while we were playing. The show rocks. The kids are cool. But my mind is already on the plane. Two nights without a working shower; the van is gonna smell sweet tomorrow.

#### DECEMBER 29<sup>th</sup> – BONN, Germany (Bla)

Woah. A lot of people in this little club. Bonn seems like a good a place as any for the show. It's funny, but the guy promoting the show is the same guy that Ben got yelled at by some years ago when Forstell Ford played at Sound Exchange and nobody showed up. Everything is cool as he turns out to be a nice guy. Tour makes you do crazy things sometimes and we are cooked enough to understand it.

Great show and everything, but last shows are never real. Especially on a tour this long, we were all miles away. It was still fun. We stayed up all night before making the flights back to London. We have a nice goodbye with Sasha and Ingo (he came down for the last show). I'm gonna really miss these guys.

#### DECEMBER 30<sup>th</sup> – LONDON

Tour is over and it's fun time. We get breakfast at the Gipsy Rose. It all ends how it starts. No point in sleeping. When you're in London you wanna do as much as you can as you never know when you'll be back. Chris and I head out to catch Hard Skin with the Clashettes. Hard Skin was touring around Europe just like us, so they're pretty tight and the crowd goes mad. Time to go home.



#### PICS:

- 1) At the Gipsy Hill trainstation
- 2) Lunch in Hungary
- 3) Chris as tourist
- 4) Outside the Alhambra.
- 5) Ben back at the Gipsy Rose Cafe

## TOP TENS

### Top Ten Anarcho Demo Tapes Worth Looking For

**Anthrax** – Best track on the second Bullshit Detector comp comes, not surprisingly, from the best demo tape of the lot. "All The Wars" is a brilliant song delivered with a real urgency that they never 100% recaptured on vinyl. Melodic as well, it was almost like the UK Subs' catchier moments. A really rocking demo that I wish Rugger Bugger was still planning to release on CD for all you sad souls who missed out.

**Flowers In The Dustbin** – Their one and only demo tape is as good as any of their vinyl records. This tape is a good example of how many bands viewed demos as seriously as they did vinyl. With a variety of different recordings, they capture a moment from one of their first gigs, the emotionally suffocating "Aim For The Sky" and one of their most beautiful songs "Cowboys And Indians".

**Chumbawamba** – They did a lot of fucking demo tapes. But "History Luddite" that was released on 69 Tapes (an offshoot of 96 Tapes [an offshoot of All The Madmen]) is unbelievable. There are many songs that would eventually be reworked making up some of the material from the first two albums as well as the early singles and compilation cuts. Recorded live, it's the rawest form of these songs and the only solid document of them right at the cusp of adding more polished production values.

**Youth In Asia** – The "Sex Object" demo is a real anomaly in anarcho punk. With keyboards and soaring female vocals, they are more musically aligned with post-punk or even new wave. "Power And The Glory" is beautiful and "Victim of Rape" is harrowing. I doubt Bikini Kill or Sleater-Kinney were aware of Youth In Asia. But nevertheless, they are kindred spirits.

**Naked** – Another group with a brilliant track on the second Bullshit Detector, the groups second demo was released by Bluurg just previous to their 7". Not really "rock n roll" but more rockin' than most of the others, they had a sensibility that was clearly closer to the first generation punk bands than the new streams flowing from anarcho punk. It was like a breath of fresh air.

**The Mob** – If you know the Mob then you know about the "Ching" demo. Recorded on a boom box in their kitchen, it's pretty rough sound-wise. But it's a great document of a stripped down version of "No Doves". It also shows how the band had evolved and would play their catalog live without the intimidation of the studio. For the Mob enthusiasts, it's the only place where the song "White Niggers" appears.

**Omega Tribe** – A lot of the better moments of this came out in the CD retrospective from a couple of years back. But it's still worth mentioning the power of it all. "Nature Wonder" still sounds better than the 7" version and "Picture Now" sounds great. A really versatile band, it's not really fair that some people compare them to the Faces.

**Passion Killers** – Titled "Be Happy Despite It All", this tape is one of the poppiest things to come out of anarcho punk. Okay, not a lot of great poppy stuff in general from that scene. But you can easily see why Chumbawamba found a kindred spirit in the Passion Killers.

**Faction** – The "Through The Window" demo on 96 Tapes is really something. Catchy as hell, it's also fascinating to hear the band as visualized with a completely different vocalist as on the 7". Melodic and complex, they in some ways paved the way for groups like Dan, Joyce McKinney Experience, etc.

**Kulturkampf** – Never able to get anything on even a vinyl comp, Kulturkampf are one of those sad bands completely lost in the era. Complex and beautiful, "The Corpse of Bureaucracy" is better sounding than many of the albums of the time. Another demo, "The Struggle" is equally engaging.

## TOP TEN HONG KONG ACTION FLICKS

I've been a long time fan of Hong Kong action movies. I remember when I was a kid and I would visit my Dad on weekends. He would basically let me see whatever movies I felt like. We saw loads of horror movies like "The Conqueror Worm" or "The Demon Seed". We would see all the great blaxploitation films like "Bare Knuckles" and "TNT Jackson". We saw anything from Toho. We didn't know what was good or what was cool. We just knew what we wanted to see and we would check out a double feature every weekend. Sometimes we would watch three or four movies. I love doing that to this day. At some stage we got into martial arts movies. In the wake of my obsession with Bruce Lee (every boy my age was), I was blown away by "Five Fingers of Death". From there on, I needed to see ANYTHING Shaw Brothers or Golden Harvest. I hold all of these movies close to my heart. As I got older, the martial arts movies are the only ones that I closely kept up with through the



bleak '80s and '90s. Here's my totally arbitrary Top Ten Hong Kong Action Flicks...

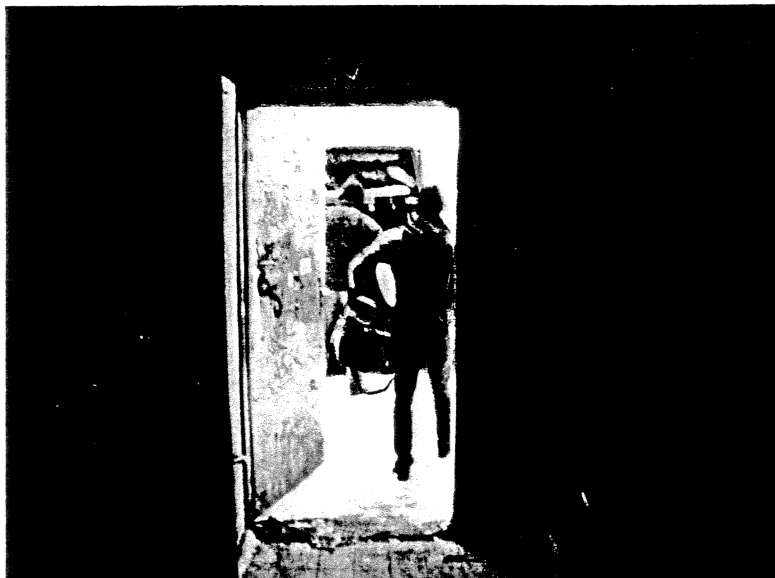
**Fists of Legend** – I know it may seem like blasphemy to pick this over "Chinese Connection" (which this is something of a remake of) as my all time fave, but I have to be honest. I love this movie. It's by far the best Jet Li movie in terms of action. Taking a contemporary look at Japan's racist overtures in China in the '30s, Jet Li is a student studying in Japan dealing with violence and ridicule like a scholarly Jackie Robinson. Hearing of his master's death, he returns back to his home to find that they are in a rivalry with a Japanese martial arts school. From their the ass kicking begins with what might be my favorite fight scene of all time with Jet Li taking on several dozen of the Japanese students. Unlike "Chinese Connection", racism is dealt with on both sides showing the political nuances that affect and are affected by it. A pivotal point here is when he needs to defend his Japanese girlfriend played by the amazing Shinobu Nakayama. She also stars in a couple of the amazing '90s Gamera movies.

**Hard-Boiled** – I used to love John Woo and Chow Yun-Fat. I still think Brother Chow is cool. But Woo has made some real stinkers since

moving to America. Hollywood really fucked him up. But when he was good, he was amazing and this is his peak. You know how everyone is quick to parody and copy the Hong Kong style with double fist handgrips and body counts as quick as they are high? This is the epitome of how that style can be done right. Chow is amazing as a hardened cop trying to take down a powerful Triad sect. Tony Leung Chiu Wai is an undercover cop who crosses paths with Chow and is forced to become his partner. The acrimonious relationship becomes their bond as the second half of the film is the two taking down the bad guys in a hospital that doubles as a Triad front.

Enter The Dragon – It's hard to choose one Bruce Lee movie as the best. I love them all. I have real deep connections with "Fists of Fury" and "Chinese Connection" and even "Return of the Dragon". But this is the most consistent film of them all. I don't need to say much as this is the one on the list you are most likely to have seen. But if you haven't seen it lately, see the new remastered version. It's amazing.

Five Fingers of Death – This film is so simple in structure. There's a good martial arts school and a bad one. They both spend time getting their best pupil trained for a prestigious tournament. But all hell breaks loose along the way. I love this movie. It's totally low budget, but still manages to steal just enough to work. The music is stolen from "Ironside". The effects are the kind of thing you could do on a home movie. But it is so exciting and it doesn't look like anything else. I don't think enough is ever mentioned about film aesthetic and Shaw Brothers flicks. It's a beautiful thing.



36th Chamber of Shaolin – This movie is sort of the template for every Shaolin martial arts flick that involved any sort of rigorous training sequence. But it deserves all the praise it gets as it's the starting point for anyone interested in the Gordon Liu era of action movies. Driven by revenge (a noble cause in these films) San Te goes through a rigorous training at the Shaolin Temple before getting kicked out for wanted to share the secrets with the people. From there he builds up a crew to help him exact his revenge. No computers, of course, and often done in just one take, this film is daring in more ways than most.

Naked Killer – Hey, back in the '90s everybody loved Madonna and Claire Danes and Winona Ryder and whatever. I don't actually even know because at some point I started to tune out Hollywood. I still mostly tune out American cinema 'cos there's just so much more garbage, even with the underground and cult stuff. So my favorites were always people like Chingmy Yao. I love her comedies like "Blind Romance" and "Saint of Gamblers" a lot. But this crazy action movie is where I first got into her. A duo of rapist-killing, lesbian assassins for hire have to fight off a former pupil. It's super stylized and captures all of the best elements of what people like about Category III flicks.

Police Story 3 – This is by far, my favorite Jackie Chan movie. Some people mostly like his really early work with Sammo Hung and that

crew. But I like this mid-career stuff. He had the budget to do some really crazy stunts and he had the know how to make it into a really fluid film. There are some great moments, but I actually think it's Michelle Yeoh who steals the show in this flick. Aside from riding a motorcycle onto a moving train, she does some of the most athletic martial arts you'll ever see. It's quite graceful and beautiful and the one flick where you can obviously see how her ballet background paid off.

Heroic Trio, The – Speaking of Michelle Yeoh, this movie is a total nutso idea that could only happen at the height of Hong Kong cinema's prosperity. Yeoh is teamed up with fellow superstars, Maggie Cheung and the late Anita Mui to form a post-apocalyptic group of superheroines. All made famous through their work in Jackie Chan films, Heroic Trio has a lot of humor in it. But if the premise isn't absurd enough, they are out to find an evil Eunuch who's been stealing babies.

Untold Story, The – Anthony Wong has made some seriously fucked up movies. "Underground Banker", "Ebola Syndrome", "Daughter of Darkness"... If he's not doing something gross, he's right nearby. But that's why we love him. He's nuts. This one is the one. This is the most fucked up movie he's made and it's one of the most fucked movies in the history of Hong Kong cinema. Allegedly based on a true story, a guy murders a family, grinds up their bodies, and sells them as bao – the steamed buns you get at Dim Sum. That's the premise and how he gets more meat is the story.

This is definitely not for everyone.

Dr. Lamb – Since we're talking about the disgusting side of violent movies, we can't avoid "Dr. Lamb". Also based on a true story, this one is about a cab driver that doubles as a psychotic killer and necrophiliac. Simon Yam is brilliant as usual. It's strange that a guy like him, who is basically a huge sex symbol, would take on such a crazy role. It would be like a movie with Orlando Bloom fucking dead bodies and surgically removing breasts and tossing them around. The whole film is shot like Argento with almost psychedelic fringes.

#### TOP TEN OVER-RATED "CLASSICS"

Now, before I have to answer another shitload of pissed off emails, I do like most of these records. I think most of them are good. Maybe even great. I'm sure someone out there could take this same list and call it their Top Ten Albums of All Time. But the lie that we think of as "Popular Music History" starts with the idea that there are untouchable works above any criticism. There are a million music histories out there. Write your own story.

Here are some of the so-called "classic" rock records that we've been told to like by generations of rock writers who are too scared to say what they really feel in fear that they'll never get published in one of the glossies. It's amazing how much smart people will degrade themselves for less than minimum wage if it means being part of a legacy of drug addicts, pseudo-intellectuals and straight up sexist pigs.



Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band – I'm not one of those Beatle-haters that think they're entirely overrated. I love "Revolver" and "Abbey Road". I even like "The White Album", though mostly for nostalgic reasons. But I could never understand what the big deal was with this album. Why does every so-called legit music journalist list it as the best album of all time? It's okay. There are a couple of good songs. But it always seemed like a bunch of corny gimmicks and sound effects dumped on some of the band's weaker material. The whole premise of the record is pretentious and boring. The songs I love from this record ("Good Morning, Good Morning", "Getting Better" and "She's Leaving Home") seem more at home on "Revolver" and would be hugely improved by ditching the stupid farm animal noises and, ugh, that fucking harp!

Nevermind – Again, I loved Nirvana. "Bleach" rocked my world when it came out. The first time they played in Frisco, it was a beautiful shambles. You can imagine my shock when this album became their big hit and was hailed by all the right-on people as music's salvation. By far their worst studio album, "Nevermind" is a great example of what was wrong with '90s production. Rather than reacting to the corny gloss of '80s commercial rock production, the '90s went one step further making the sheen of in-human drums and electronics completely faceless and dull. It's no wonder that every so-called modern car commercial has that synthetic rock sound encapsulated by this record. The guitars don't even sound like there's a human being behind it. The vocals are doubled and tripled and processed to death. The drums sound like something invented at the Lucas Ranch. To see Nirvana live was something I'll always treasure and the songs on this record are perfect. It just makes me think that there is a really, really amazing demo tape of all these songs floating around out there someplace.

Ramones – I love these fucking songs. I totally love these songs. But, fuck, shit, goddamnit, why the hell did they split the bass and guitars into separate channels? Everyone makes excuses for this and how it was a spontaneous act of genius. For me, it just means that I never listen to this album ever. That's why I love "It's Alive" so much.

Master Of Puppets – I was so bummed when this record came out. I loved "Ride The Lightning" so much. In fact, I just loved the first three songs. It was probably six months before I even bothered to listen to anything past "For Whom The Bell Tolls". I bought "Master Of Puppets" the day it came out. I had to have a friend drive me all around Hawaii until we found a shop that had it. I put it on and was at first excited by "Battery", which remains one of their best songs. The title track comes on and you know it's gonna be a let down. If the title track doesn't lead off the album, there's usually a reason. But I was still with it. By the end of the record I was just numbed by the slick production and the ratio of fast to slow. While I've gotten over the need for everything to be fast, I still maintain that the craziness of the first two albums was a lot of their charm. The drums and guitars sounded so much more alive. They sounded like a band that was hurtling through space where the slightest miscal-

culation could kill them all. "Master Of Puppets" sounded like four musicians sitting for a month in a studio working on parts.

Young Loud And Snotty – I have no way of defending this. You can tell me I'm wrong for putting this on the list and you may be right. I always hated the Dead Boys. They were just a stupid band with stupid antics and stupid lyrics that eventually found a way to use all that stupidity as a gimmick. Plus, I hated Stiv Bators' voice.

Yankee Hotel Foxtrot – Oh my God, this album sucks. Take the absolute worst elements of Radiohead and Pavement and give it a "roots" feel and you get this bullshit. What the fuck? Wilco are such fucking phonies. What? Pavement made cool ironic pop and it sold? Wilco gives you "Heavy Metal Drummer". Radiohead do something kookie with electronics and the press buys it? Wilco suddenly discovers the Conet Project. Beck finds his roots on his latest record. Well, you know what Wilco did next... Pavement, Radiohead and

Beck have all made some amazing records. No need for this one. I am trying to break your heart? Fuck you!

Nevermind The Bollocks – Man, as a kid in Hawaii, it was so hard for me to find this record, I eventually had to buy it on TAPE two years after it was released! After hearing the Clash, the Damned and the Ramones, I dunno, this didn't even sound like what I expected punk rock to sound like. I know that sounds crazy as they were the first band and blah, blah, blah. The first three singles are still great. "Anarchy in the UK", "God Save The Queen" and "Pretty Va-

cant" should be National Treasures in England. There are other good songs too. But so much of it is disposable and plodding with way too heavy-handed guitars and a relentless barrage of just SOUND. If you're a punk rocker, you've quite possibly heard this album close to 100 times and have lost all perspective. I get that way with records like "Abbey Road" where I've heard it so many times I can't even judge "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" much less "Octopus's Garden". But if you just close your eyes and really think about "Problems" – weren't you just dying for that song to end so "God Save The Queen" would come on?

Led Zeppelin IV – Yeah, "Black Dog" is fucking amazing. "Rock and Roll" is so good on record they could never do it justice live. "The Battle of Evermore" is totally... Hey, this song kinda sucks shit. What the fuck is this? I don't remember "Stairway to Heaven" having those half-assed Jethro Tull flutes. There's a lot of amazing stuff here. I can listen to "Misty Mountain Hop" for the rest of my life. But "Going To California" is the kind of shit that made me drop out of college. The acoustic Shire of this album makes up 25% of the songs. That's a problem the band never really reconciled and they certainly don't come to terms with it on this album. Plus, context has to count for something and at this point in time, I think we've all heard "Stairway to Heaven" enough.

Pet Sounds – I sorta like a lot of this record. But it's not the best record of all time. I think when people say that, they mean to say that "God Only Knows" is possibly the best pop song of all time and with that I can totally agree. It's by far the high point of the album.



There's some interesting production stuff that everyone talks about. But there's a fine line between experimentation and gimmickry. I don't think they were tinkering to cover up a lack of material. But I think that maybe there was so much excitement about trying new things that he rushed through the songwriting process at times so he could hurry into the studio. There are some great songs on this record and some songs that are really like Brian Wilson going through the motions. I enjoy this record. But I don't put it any higher than hugely underrated Beach Boys albums like "Friends" or "20/20".

The Joshua Tree – Fuck me! Was this the birth of emo? Yeah, so the Edge seems like a cool guy and, while Bono should fucking shut up, it's better that he's blabbering for the left... I think... I fell for them at first. What can I say? I actually still like the first two albums. I guess I've got a little emo in me. So shoot me, "Shadows and Tall Trees" is a cool song. But this album went too far. It's just so... EMO. God, it's like grading a 9<sup>th</sup> grade poetry class. Those vocals are so emo! By that I mean they use that trick where they over emote, they overplay their hand, and come up with nothing. There's no real emotion at all. It's just a bunch of hot air.

#### Top Ten American Directors

This list is only partially in order. I love all of these people and I really don't know how to prioritize, as they are all pretty different. I was compelled to make this list because, after some contemplation on the sad state of affairs American film culture was in, it's easy to find it hard to believe that ANYTHING good ever came out of this country. So here are some of the good people I relate to in American film history. Oh, and just so you don't ask, I don't like David Lynch very much. I thought I liked "Eraserhead" until I realized I was just pretending I liked it. It's just my personal taste and not a diss on all you "Twin Peaks" nerds.

J o h n  
Cassavetes –  
If you are reading this either  
A) you are well aware of the importance of Cassavetes and it would

be even more pompous than usual for me to try to add anything or B) you don't know what I'm talking about. If that's the case, stop reading this and go read "Cassavetes On Cassavetes" and watch "Shadows", "Faces", "A Woman Under The Influence" and, my favorite, "Love Streams". I'll just add that back in the '80s, I was a fundraiser for SANE/Freeze and got to do a lot of work in the Hollywood Hills. I hung out with Pierce Brosnan, Bill Murray, Morgan Fairchild, etc. The coolest thing that ever happened was when I had to go to meet Cassavetes to get him to renew his membership. He was pretty ill at the time, so I didn't get to meet him. But Gena Rowlands was very, very kind despite the circumstances. It was just so amazing to come up on this house that you immediately

recognize from his films.

Abel Ferrara – I'm not saying I wanna go on a road trip with this guy. But I love his movies. Since "The Driller Killer" back in 1979, he has made complex and challenging films defying budget limitations by making vivid use of context. If you can find a safe haven and some version of sympathy in "Bad Lieutenant" or "King of New York" then you will be able to follow is deformed Chi that is the backbone of most of his films. An experimental filmmaker, he takes chances that don't always work. There's no point in making film experiments if they're all gonna be safe.

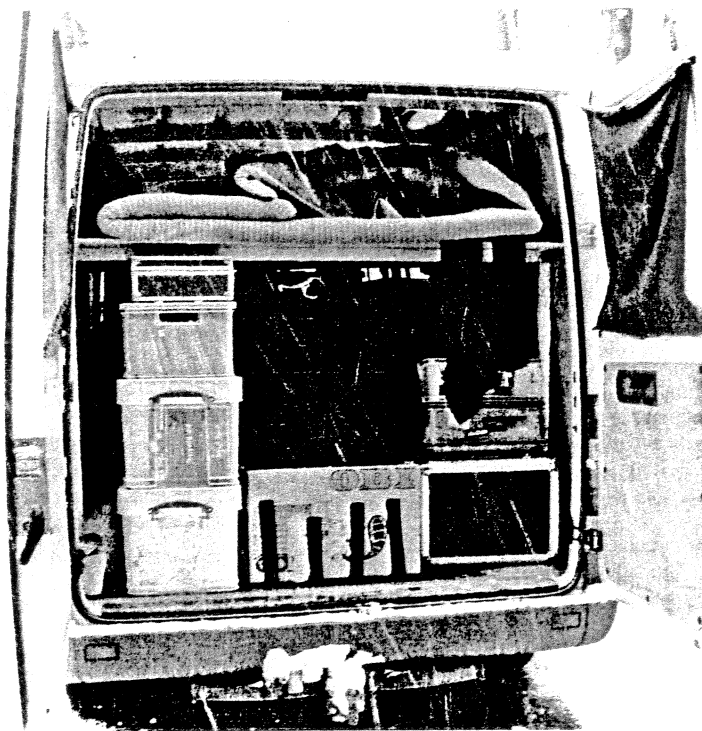
Stanley Kubrick – Yeah, I went to "Eyes Wide Shut" opening day, first showing (I used to do that a lot actually) and I hated it. I was so sad that it would be his last film and I couldn't get behind it in any way. The acting is appalling. The dialog... I dunno. But everything he did from 1955 to 1987 is fucking flawless. That's a record you can't fuck with. In my skewed and humble opinion, "Lolita" and "2001" are both contenders for best film of all time. Every movie is a perfect blending of style and substance ultimately revealing a brilliant and compassionate mind at work. The contrasts of alienation, confusion and structure are all complicated with humor even in his most dry films.

Hal Ashby – I go back and forth with this guy. Movies like "Shampoo", "The Last Detail" and "Being There" are pretty unfuckwithable. The guys started off editing "The Loved One" for fuck's sake! He's

great. He was also a fuck up. He drugged himself nearly to death, finally getting hospitalized in the early '80s. Between that and his general unreliability, he basically put himself out of work doing mostly crass TV shit at the end of his life. So little is discussed about this guy compared to his peers that I don't know whether the story is tragic or pathetic.

Ida Lupino – After all this time, people still just think

of her as an actress. She did get her start acting back in the '30s (and she was great in "The Sea Wolf"). But it was her writing and directing that I think made her so important to American cinema. In 1949, she got the chance to write and direct "Not Wanted", a sad, sad story of a woman desperate to escape her drab existence who falls for a traveling musician who sees her as little more than a fling. Things grow more complicated when she's finally left alone only to find out she's pregnant. For the first time, these sort of pulpish ideas in low to mid-budget films took on a profound edge as Lupino knew how to express what the women might really be feeling. Her other films like "Never Fear", "Outrage" and "The Hitchhiker" are black and white existential meditations where ennui is





quickly replaced by total despair.

Sam Fuller – Film Noir was kind of like Be Bop. It was revolutionary and hyper-stylistic. But soon all the scales and modes were well defined. Sam Fuller started directing in this age, and like Lupino, was able to take a genre that was quickly becoming codified and convert it into something deeper. So movies like "Pickup On South Street" and "House of Bamboo" greatly benefited from Fuller's touch and additional writing. The culmination of his work came in two films. The first was "Shock Corridor" that was avant-garde in it's hugely metaphorical approach and it's constant unease of life in the mental institution. The addition of random footage in a dream-type sequence precedes everyone from Chris Marker to Craig Baldwin. The second was "The Naked Kiss" which fits closer into the Noir mold while taking it to another area with sentimentality so overplayed as to verge on ironic and a grim crime approached like an Italian giallo.

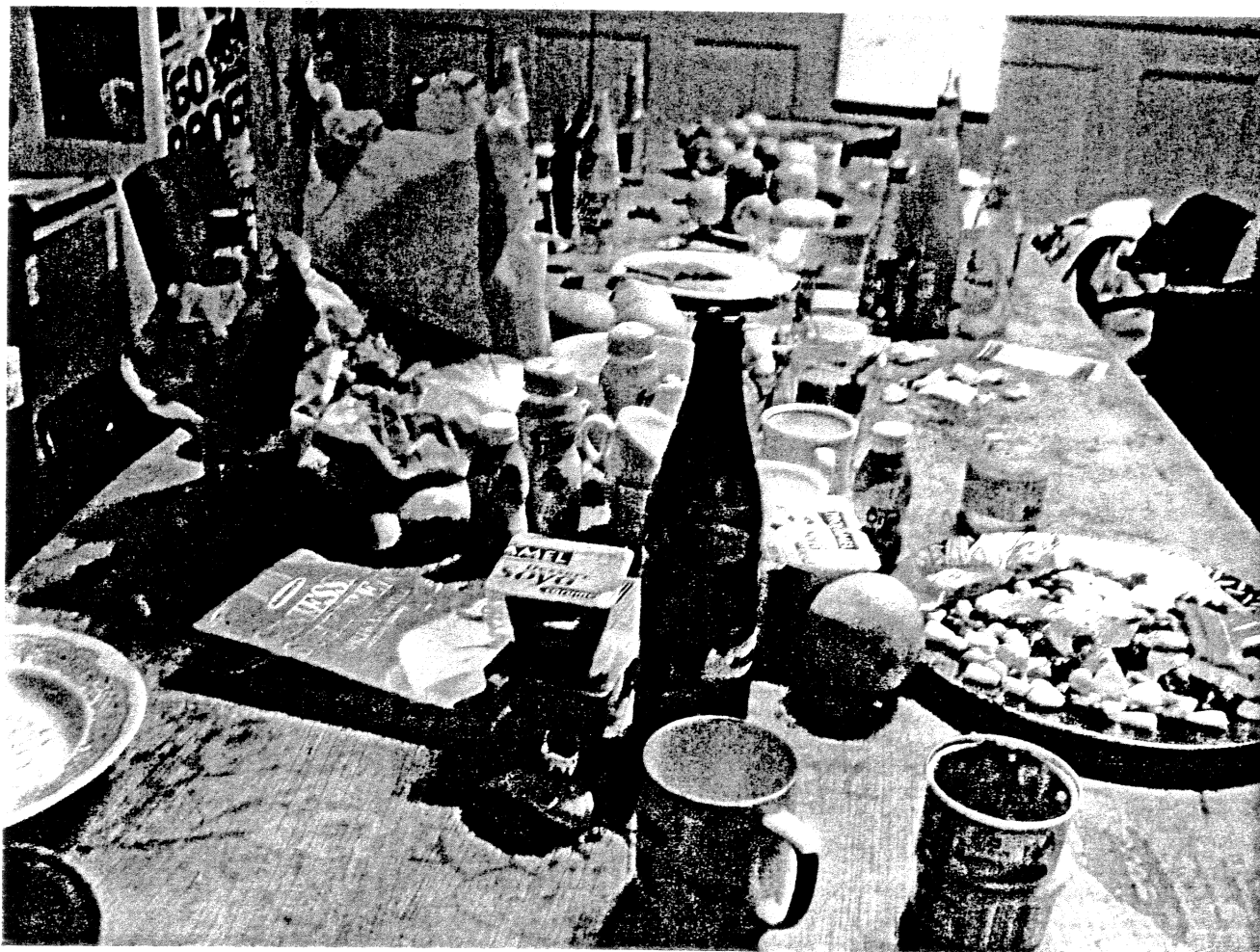
Woody Allen – "Annie Hall" might be my favorite movie of all time and that absolves all cinematic crimes propagated in the new millennium by Allen. Starting with "Take The Money And Run" and ending with "Sweet And Lowdown", the only film of his that I don't love is "Celebrity". Everything else I can watch over and over again. The guy has never been ashamed of the fact that he's smart. He may be modest in appearance. But he writes smart dialog and especially in those years, he never dumbed down for anyone. If anything, he was pushing people to expand what they knew by making references to films and books outside of banal American consciousness. He's more of a link to European cinema than even Scorsese.

Robert Altman – The guy did fucking "Nashville"! I've watched that movie more times than I can remember. He had Barbara Harris

before she went Disney. Yeah, I fucking hated "Short Cuts" like any true Raymond Carver fan does. But I love most of his other films. I think it's great that everyone talks over each other. It feels like a real conversation happening even in the most absurd situations. Even some of his more current films like "Gosford Park" and "Kansas City" aren't too bad. He's sort of the Chabrol of the American new wave.

Billy Wilder – "The Private Life Of Sherlock Holmes" is one of his most underrated films, but it's one of my favorites. Everyone loves "Sunset Blvd.", "Stalag 17" and "The Apartment" and for good reason. But his 1970 look at a drug addicted Holmes is complex, surreal and mysteriously incomplete. With a story that involved kidnapping, spies, drugs and even the Loch Ness Monster, the three and a half hour film was edited in half leaving an almost Burroughs-esque mystery that makes you constantly have to pay deep attention to score the pay-offs along the way. Christopher Lee as Mycroft is fucking brilliant.

George Cukor – Friend of Hitchcock and Bunuel. Director of "The Philadelphia Story", "Gaslight", "Adam's Rib" and "A Star Is Born". I think this quote from him says it all: "...you direct a couple of successful pictures with women stars, so you become a 'woman's director'...Direct a sentimental little picture and all you get is sob stuff. I know I've been in and out of those little compartments. Heaven knows everyone has limitations. But why make them narrower than they are?"



# THE BECAUSE

*The Because are another one of the brilliant bands we've had the good fortune of meeting and touring with in Japan. A young group, they have a great demo and an even better split single (with the Dauntless Elite) out on Snuffy Smiles. Their music is dynamic and catchy with a crazy two guitar attack that is reminiscent of early Leatherface with a bit more Husker Du and a little less Motorhead. A thunderous rhythm section helps keep them ahead of the other bands mining similar territory. This interview was done with singer/guitarist Shu. Other members are Mol on guitar, Yuka on bass and Akira on drums.*

**Lance - Who was the Last Last One?**

Shu - It is The Because's guitarist Mol.

Lance - This may seem really stupid, but where exactly are you in Mie? Are you in Ise-City or Takie? I'm sort of confused...

Shu - We live in Ise-city and Taki-town. Ise and Taki are the part in Mie.

**Lance - How long has there been punk rock on Mie? What was the old punk scene like?**

Shu - As far as I knew, about 8 years before, the band called Donutman gathered a lot of bands and began to plan a show. I met a member at the time. Before it, the hardcore scene seems to have gotten into full swing. But I don't know about it. At that time, we were discussing punk, DIY, the underground scene well. We stimulated each other and formed each style, attitude. I think it was a very good scene. But now, we are active in another style. So we have little opportunity to play together. However, that was good only at the first time. Now punk in Mie is only mere music. The ironbound rule of communication in this town is fake friendship, which is affirmed by anything a friend does.

**Lance - How did you meet? Had you been in previous bands?**

Shu - Akira and I were playing before the hardcore band called UNDONE. Mol were playing in The Last Last One.

**Lance - What does the name The Because mean?**

Shu - I quoted it from the title of the Beatles's song. I am big fan of John Lennon.

**Lance - Do you get to play much? What are your local shows like?**

Shu - We play about twice in a month. We always sell vegetarian curry for carfare of the band in the distant place. It is very popular. But no one has an interest in why we make vegetarian food.

**Lance - Are there many people or bands that you can relate to in your area?**

Shu - There is not much. The only band is called Eric Orgast. The guitarist formerly of the Because began a new band. I am looking forward to seeing it.

**Lance - What do you all do outside of the band? Do you all have jobs?**

Shu - We all have jobs. But I will lose my job soon.

**Lance - What do you do in your spare time? What is there to do in your hometown?**

Shu - I like to draw a picture and watch movies. Akira likes cooking. Yuka likes to read books. Mol is drinking.

**Lance - What is "Cheers For Your Future And My Past" about? Is it a true story?**

Shu - Yes, it's a true story.

Even though I could stay cool



Is there any worth of it?

If I'll never embrace you again

Is there any worth of the faith between you and me?

If I can become heartless

I don't even care to live in the dream

Keep sprawling from that day

Your shadow looks smaller than a flea now

**Lance - What is "The Conversation With The Walls In The Reposed Air" about?**

Shu - My feeling and outlook are different. I am tired of the friction. I think anyone would think so.

I remember there is no place for me anywhere

I feel like the bottom of a dead well

The conversation with the walls in the reposed air

Fuck my isolation

# THE BECAUSE

**Lance** - Do you think of yourselves as depressed or alienated?

**Shu** - Yes. Probably the worst is a damage obsession.

**Lance** - You cover "Boxcar" by Jawbreaker and "Peasant In Paradise" by Leatherface. What do those songs mean to you?

**Shu** - We cover "Peasant in Paradise" in Leatherface tribute disks on Snuffy Smile. Yoichi recommended the song. But now the song is the most special of Leatherface's song. "Boxcar" is the present for friend. We love both.

**Lance** - What is Parque Espana? Why is there a Spanish village in Mie?

**Shu** - That is a mere leisure facility, an amusement park. I can't understand why a Spanish village is in Mie either.

**Lance** - Do you think Japan is very superstitious? Are any of you very superstitious?

**Shu** - There are various cultures and religions in Japan. But I do not think that The Japanese themselves are religious and superstitious. In Japan, there is a custom in which one human being enjoys various different religious events, such as Christmas and the Buddhist All Souls' Day. Most people consider it an individual pleasure and not religious. I think that means that it is not religious. But those who believe in religion are a few. And many people do not feel hesitation.

It is because of common sense that it is not religious in Japan. I think that common sense is conversely superstitious. I do not think that it is a mistake to criticize the religion itself. But it is a mistake to criticize the individual. There is not a person who believes religion in the Because's member. Is this an answer?

**Lance** - What is your favorite non-punk music to listen to?

**Shu** - I like the Beatles, the Kinks, the Byrds and Tom Waits.

**Lance** - Why do you like Snoopy so much?

**Yuka** - Snoopy is very cute. I have two stuffed animals.

**Lance** - What's next for the band?

**Shu** - I want to release album and go abroad at tour. It is not a schedule, but hope.

## DISCOGRAPHY:

1. "Demo 2004" ("Unbearable Lightness of Being", "The Conversation With The Walls In Reposed Air", "Sign", "We Are Extra")
2. split 7" w/ the Dauntless Elite (Snuffy Smiles)
3. V/A "The Bastards Can't Dance - A Tribute To LEATHERFACE" CD ("Peasant In Paradise" - Snuffy Smiles)

## PICS:

- 1) Akira and Shu
- 2) Mol and Yuka



# THE HUSBANDS

*I fucking love the Husbands. I think Sarah Reed might be a genius. I think Sadie might be a genius. Combined, they're definitely genius. The first time I met Sadie, I was visiting some folks up in Olympia. Somehow after a fancy dress party and some gambling, we wound up back at Sadie's room to watch "Kids In The Hall" videos. She told me some crazy story about kissing some guy on the eyeball. She said that when she kissed him, some gross liquid shot out of his eye into her mouth. When I first met Sarah Reed, she was in the Bonnot Gang. I was told that Maggie was in the band, who I hadn't met yet. I assumed she was the drummer since her sister Toby is a drummer. So, for a month or so after she moved to SF, I called, Sarah "Maggie" and she was too nice to ever correct me. I only found out my mistake later when I finally met Maggie. Anyway, they're great and their music is like a perfect blend of the Shangri-Las and Pussy Galore. It's that fucking amazing and if you can hang with it, you will be rewarded. Of all the bands these two have been in (Bonnot Gang, The Lies) this is the first time I've heard Sarah sing. She's got a once in a generation voice.*

**Lance - What does the name mean?**

Sarah - Originally it was chosen out of a few potential names and I think we liked it cause we had all been recently divorced (nothing serious though). We thought of it because of the John Cassavetes film, but the great thing is that for us it has come to represent our feeling "married to the band".

**Lance - What would you say is your theme?**

Sarah - Sex, Vengeance, Girls, and Guitars.

**Lance - Aside from the two of you, what relationship is there from the Bonnot Gang to the Lies to the Husbands? Aesthetically...**

Sarah - We are always trying to play good riffs and rhythm though sometimes loose and sometimes uptight. We always wanted to reach people. It was never just for us to enjoy and we've always

used the word "soul" to describe what it was we were trying to ghetto. But probably, the greatest link through all of these bands is really Sadie's guitar playing which if you listen has really given each band a recognizable sound that is common in all of the bands you mentioned.

**Lance - I'm really glad you Sarah started singing. What made you start?**

Sarah - I started singing cause I just wanted to be playing music all the time and I really prefer music with singers and lyrics to instrumental music (though I like both) but I got tired of waiting around for the right person to do the right thing. I figured I would be dependent on someone else and whatever pace they moved at until I learned to sing.

**Lance - Where do you get your singing style?**

Sarah - I decided given what I had to work with I couldn't sound too bad if I tried to sing like the Pandoras or The Brood. I also like to try to sing like Brenda Lee and Etta James. In the end you get what you get of course.

**Lance - Do you feel like you self-consciously pick the songs you cover? They generally reflect a certain era. Would you**

**ever cover something more contemporary?**

Sarah - I would have liked to cover "Hey-Ya" by Outcast or something off the Strokes 1st record cause they are great songs but I think in the end I would just feel like I was trying to prove something. For the most part I just think music use to be better or it was better produced, somehow the songs come across to me better. Most modern music just doesn't move me.

**Lance - Could you speak a little to the horror element of your group?**

Sarah - I think monsters make a good target audience for the Husbands

cause monsters tend to have a real visceral reaction to stimuli. I guess I am referring to specific monsters: Zombies, Frankenstein, Werewolves, Jason, Michael Meyers, you know, the types who know what they want, real monomaniacs. We figure if we can





make them happy we'll be reaching most people on a real basic gut level. So blood, Big Beats and loud noises help.

**Lance - How does your film making relate to the Husbands? What is the crossover point?**

Sarah - We made Charm together (Sadie and Sarah R.) in 1996, we learned how to be really fucking efficient and serious, which has turned in to what is our bands work ethic. As in MARRIED to the band.

**Lance - Do you think it will ever affect the song content?**

Sarah - Of course, you write songs and make movies about things you're into. They are the same.

**Lance - On the same subject, do you think you lean more to goth or more to camp?**

Sarah - Probably camp since I think Goth is incredibly campy.

**Lance - What do you do in your free time?**

Sarah - No free time in SF. Just work and music.

**Lance - What is your priority? Guitar player, singer, songwriter, entertainer, artist?**

Sarah - Entertainer

**Lance - Who are the weirdest bands you've played with? Who do you go down with?**

Sarah - J Church.

**Lance - Ooh, what provoked you to get a bass player?**

Sarah - We don't really have a bass player so much 2 bass playing percussionists. We like dynamics and having the option to add bass occasionally helps with that.

**Lance - What's the worst show you've played?**

Sarah - Des Moines Iowa Hairy Mary's for the second time on our tour. There was not a lot of reason to play there a second time since no one came the first time around which makes word of mouth sort of impossible. We meant well and intended to put a good show for the few lonely souls in the bar that night, but we got kind of drunk and as the saying goes, the path to hell was paved with good intentions.

**Lance - Who is the worst driver in the band?**

Sarah - No comment.

**Lance - What is your favorite compilation tape?**

Sarah - Sadie's favorite comp tape is called It's no big Deal and Andy Stamets made it.

**Lance - What's going on in Frisco? Last time I was there it felt like that Pretenders song "I went back to Ohio and my city was gone..."**

Sarah - Losin' Streaks (Sacramento) Mothballs (Oakland) The Duch-

ess (San Francisco) Lost Weekend, Rainbow Grocery, Drugs, Homelessness.

**Lance - Do you think anything new can happen in music?**

Sarah - Yes, so?

**Lance - Do you listen to records intently or are they more of a soundtrack to your life?**

Sarah - Mostly I listen pretty intently cause I don't have a lot of time to make it a background thing; It distracts me (usually cause it's better than whatever else I am doing).



**Lance - How do you want people to perceive the group?**

Sarah - We want people to really enjoy themselves unselfconsciously. I was recently watching a video of Bo-Diddley on The Tammy Show where he has his "sister" the Duchess and two other back up vocalist dancing together in a line and they have the most outrageous and shockingly sexual moves and he's dripping with sweat and the audience is screaming and I almost screamed myself just watching the video of it. It made me think the reason why people when fucking apeshit when they saw the old rock and roll and R&B groups is cause it was just that exciting, not that the audience was naive or shocked out of their innocence. The shows were just that cool.

Maybe I am being too romantic but I feel like now-a-days things are too polished and packaged but inside they have so little to offer. I want to have one of those shows that just feels so cool it makes you have to scream.

**Lance - What's next?**

Sarah - Record #2. More tours, hopefully play outside of the US.

**Lance - Anything else?**

Sarah - We have 2 new permanent members of the group so that the Husbands are Sadie Shaw and Sarah Reed on guitars and vocals. Sarah Jane Gorman on percussion, various auxiliary instruments and back up vocals and Casey Ward on Drums and backup vocals and the combination is volatile!

**DISCOGRAPHY:**

- 1) "Introducing The Husbands" LP/CD (Swami Records)
- 2) "Daniel/You Need Hands" 7" (Blue Bus Label)

**PICS:**

- 1) Live at the 16th Street BART station
- 2) Sadie and crew
- 3) Sadie and Sarah

# THE HUSBANDS

# LIBERTY

*Liberty were hard band to track down. Still, they are a big part of why I'm writing this anarcho book. There were so many smaller bands that made real contributions that get forgotten as time goes on. I think it's worth documenting what you can of their story.*

**Lance - Had you been in any bands before Liberty?**

Paul - Yes, Spice Of Life, but it didn't get past the first gig. We were shit anyway. Liberty played as well.

**Lance - How did you get into punk rock?**

Paul - I got into punk after hearing stuff like Stiff Little Fingers, UK Subs, Sex Pistols, Abrasive Wheels and other similar bands.

**Lance - What made you want to start a band in the first place?**

Paul - Liberty were already going before I joined. The reason they started a band was to get their message across.

**Lance - How did you get into the anarcho punk scene and hardcore?**

Paul - A friend of mine brought "Feeding Of The 5000" into school, we all sat about reading the sleeve. I went out and bought it, my eyes were opened, and that got me into other bands like Subhumans, Conflict, icons of Filth and other like-minded bands.

**Lance - How did you all meet? Had you known each other before the band?**

Paul - I met the rest of the band at our first gig. I saw them again a couple of weeks later at a local gig, they played with Dirt and another band that I can't remember the name of. Old age creeping up on me.

**Lance - What were the early gigs like? How different was your set when you started as opposed to when you started recording and getting more established?**

Paul - I don't know what the early gigs were like as Liberty were going 2 years before I joined. The early set didn't change much while I played with them, except for a couple of songs.

**Lance - Were you always interested in the anarcho scene? Was there ever a time that you were more of a straightforward punk band?**

Paul - We were always interested in the anarcho scene, I don't think it was much of an issue whether we were anarcho, or a straightforward punk band. My personal opinion is the straightforward punk bands didn't share the same concerns as us, I'm not denying other people's views. But if you want to make money out of punk fair enough. But don't pretend that you give a shit.

**Lance - What were some of the bands you were playing with when you were starting out?**

Paul - The bands we played with were Stone The Crows, Exit Stance, Defiance. mostly from our local area.

**Lance - What drew you to hardcore as opposed to other factions of the underground music scene? How factioned was the scene at that point?**

Paul - I don't think we were really a hardcore band as such; bands like Legion of Parasites, Napalm Death (the early stuff) and Discharge flew the hardcore flag. How do you define hardcore? I got into hardcore when a friend gave me a tape he didn't like. The tape had four bands on it, Husker Du, Black Flag, Youth Brigade and the mighty Circle Jerks. The intensity of the music blew me away. I still love hardcore to this day. There were a lot of different factions at the time, anarchos, crusties, peace punks, right and left wing skins, most were OK except for the nazi skins and apathetic punks.

**Lance - How did you come to know Conflict? How did you wind up on Mortarhate?**

Paul - I don't know how Liberty came to meet Conflict, both bands lived very close to each other.

**Lance - Were there any recordings before "Our Voice Is Tomorrow's Hope"? Were there any demo recordings?**

Paul - Yes, there was a 7 track demo recorded in April '84 and a song ("Diluted Rebellion") on "We Don't Want Your Fucking War" comp.

**Lance - What was it like recording that EP? What was it like working with Paco?**

Paul - I wasn't in the band at that time.

**Lance - What do you think you were trying to get across with that record?**

Paul - Another one I can't answer as the lyrics were written before I joined.

**Lance - How big a part did the politics play for the entire band? Were you all vegetarian at the time?**

Paul - Politics played a bit part to all the band members. Most of the band lived in a right wing town, so it would of played a big part of what was going on. All of the band were veggies, Steve was vegan.

**Lance - Did the band always operate as a collective?**

Paul - The band operated as a collective, interviews were done as a band, not just the lead singer. Any decisions were made with everybody's viewpoint aired and discussed.

**Lance - How did you select which songs would appear on the EP?**

Paul - I don't know who selected the songs, which appeared on the EP.

**Lance - How did you feel about the recording when it was done?**

Paul - I didn't get onto the recording.

**Lance - How did John from AYS wind up doing the cover art?**

Paul - John did the cover layout, not the artwork. A friend of ours called Chris (a.k.a. Wat Tyler) did the cover; I think he still has the drawing.

**Lance - How did the release of the record affect your popularity? How did it affect how the band operated?**

Paul - There was a bit more interest in the band from zines, tape labels, people outside of our town. It didn't really affect us or how we operated.

**Lance - Did you tour much after the record was released? What were gigs like at that point?**

Paul - We did a few dates, but didn't tour as such. We played 3 or 4 gigs in London with Stone the Crows and Exit Stance and the 86 Stonehenge Benefit.

**Lance - What are some of the bands you were touring with at the time?**

Paul - We played with Conflict, A.Y.S., Exit Stance, State Hate, Legion Of Parasites and once with Antisect. There were other bands, but I can't remember their names. I enjoyed most of the gigs as you met a lot of people you wouldn't normally come into contact with, but it was a bit disheartening traveling a couple of hundred miles for only 15 people to turn up.

**Lance - How long was it before you recorded your LP "Masters Make Dogs Beg For Their Bones"?**

Paul - The LP is called "The People Who Care Are Angry", it was about a year after the single was recorded.

**Lance - What was that recording process like? How did it**



differ from your previous studio work?

Paul - I didn't get to record the LP as I was kicked out of the band before they went into the studio. I got to rehearse in the studio, which was a lot different from rehearsing in a hall. I missed a couple of rehearsals, so was asked to leave.

Lance - Do you feel that your band existed as a propaganda device? To what degree did you try to divorce your more personal or individualistic creative impulses (lyrically and otherwise) from your songwriting?

Paul - I don't think the band were a propaganda device, we were just another voice amongst a lot of other pissed off voices. The main song writing was done by Mark and Mick, so I don't know how much of it comes down to personal experience.

Lance - Was there ever a specific agenda as to what needed to be covered lyrically or did you feel like you were responding to the times?

Paul - There wasn't a specific agenda, we were just responding to the things that were happening at the time. In some of the interviews we did the

zines the questions asked were a direct response to what was going on in the UK at the time. We had Miners strikes, riots in the inner cities, mass unemployment and a crap government that was happy to keep you knee deep in shit.

Lance - What do you feel you were hoping for in terms of reaction to the album?

Paul - We were hoping people would take more responsibility for their actions and to say if we all did our own little bit it could make a difference. The LP got mixed reactions, some liked it others didn't.

Lance - How satisfied were you with it both artistically and in its reception by the public?

Paul - I can't answer that, as I wasn't on the record.

Lance - How successful was the record? How did you perceive yourself in relation to the rest of the Mortarhate roster?

Paul - ...were a good mix of different styles of music, but we were all striving for the same things. We played with a few of the Mortarhate lot, Exit Stance, A.Y.S. and all the others.

Lance - Did you tour much for the record? What were the gigs like by then?

Paul - I wasn't in the band then.

Lance - Were there ever any plans for further recordings? Would you have continued with Mortarhate?

Paul - I don't know if there were any plans for more recordings. I don't think so.

Lance - Were there any other records or compilation appearances?

Paul - The only other records I know of is a couple of songs on compilations, "Diluted Rebellion" on "We Don't Want Your Fucking War" comp, "As Fool's Rush In" on the Thames Poly live double LP,

"Drug Use Is Life Abuse" and "The People Who Care Are Angry" on M.R.R. comp.

Lance - Is there much in the way of unreleased material?

Paul - I don't know of any unreleased material, but I've got a couple of live tapes. B.B.P. are going to release Liberty live at the Hope and Anchor tape in the near future.

Lance - What finally led to the band splitting?

Paul - I've no idea why they split.

Lance - Did you or any of the others play in any other bands after the split?

Paul - I lost contact with the band after they split.

Lance - What were your feelings about the anarcho punk scene at that point?

Paul - I got quite disillusioned with the anarcho scene at that point, too much infighting. There was a lot of backstabbing and shit slinging from one scene to the other, I think we lost a lot of decent people through that. After that it wasn't fun anymore.

Lance - How do you reflect on your involvement with Liberty and what the band did?

Paul - I loved the time I spent with Liberty, I saw a lot of good bands, met a lot of people and learnt how to play my bass properly. It felt good to be part of a scene that cared about other people, animals and the environment. I don't know if Liberty really achieved a lot, but I hope it made people think about things they wouldn't otherwise be bothered with.

Lance - How do you reflect back on the whole anarcho scene and what it represented?

Paul - I think the whole anarcho scene was brilliant when it first started, we actually thought we could make a big difference.

The people would al-

ways be prepared to help each other out, whether it was a place to crash, lending each others instruments or for just being there for support. I still think it is one of the better scenes about, like a big happy family.

Lance - Do you feel that it had any lasting impact on either the music scene or society?

Paul - Yes, I think people like Crass, Conflict, Flux and all the other bigger bands did make a difference to the music scene and society. Most of the bands had their activities monitored by the suits in high places, letters were opened (still doing it today), and people were harassed for no reason. It was just a way of saying "we're watching you", so don't step over the mark. Read the inner sleeve to Flux's "Strive To Survive", it was a frightening reality.

Lance - Do you still see anyone from the band?

Paul - I haven't seen any band members for a few years, we all lost contact with each other. Shame really as we all had a laugh when we were together. If any of them contact you can you get in touch with me, you never know?



# RADIO 4

*Fucking Radio 4! I'm so jealous of these guys. I interviewed Greg while he was out on the road touring with fucking Gang Of Four. How did these guys get cooler than me? Aw fuck, I love 'em. It's about time somebody started interviewing the drummer.*

**Lance - What is the worst thing about being on tour?**

Greg - Feeling lonely in a crowded room. Like, I'm rarely ever alone but I'm away from the people I care about the most. Plus, after a while I get so sick of the people I'm around and the "scene" that I find myself mentally withdrawing into a lonely place.

**Lance - What is the worst thing about getting home?**

Greg - feeling like my time is in a vice. Because I'm apart from the people I love so much, I always feel like I have to catch up and cram in what I would have been doing if I weren't just on tour or just about to go away again. It's just impossible.

**Lance - Do you ever regret being tied to the post-punk revival? Do you ever wish you had picked a name not so tied to PiL?**

Greg - It doesn't really matter much to me. I feel like we just do what we do. In a way, it's kind of good for us because there are more bands of our ilk to play with. When we started playing out in 1999 we had to play with "emo" bands all the time. As far as our name goes, the PiL reference doesn't bother me. What bothers me sometimes is that we're a band with a name that has a numeral in our name.

**Lance - What to you is unique to the experience of white kids playing soul and funk music? There is a tradition that involves everyone from Gang of Four and the Pop Group to the Minutemen and the Big Boys. It's funk and soul only in intent. The end product is something new and often equally exciting. How would you define that?**

Greg - I think you just did! I don't know if Anthony would answer this like me but I don't really see our intent as playing funk or soul music. I mean, I think what we do is sort of informed by those genres but in a way I see what we do as more of a second or third generation bastardization of those genres. I'm personally influenced more by Gang Of Four and the Minutemen than by what those bands were influenced by. Plus lately, I think what we do is pulling more from underground disco, techno and house, even though we don't sound that way live.

**Lance - What makes you a New York band?**

Greg - Well, for one, we're all native New Yorkers (though, our new guitarist despite having been born in New York, grew up in Paramus, NJ). Secondly, I think living in a place with such a diverse range of cultures puts us in a position to be exposed, sort of by osmosis, to a lot of different types of music. Thirdly, I'd say overall we're pretty politically liberal in a way that's very New York. I think New York's perspective on things is kind of different than most of the country's.

**Lance - What's the best venue in New York?**

Greg - For us, I'd say the best venue to play is Bowery Ballroom. It's not too big and not too small and everyone that works there is pretty nice. Though, I think that place has a little hex on me. I seem to have some kind of technical difficulty every time we play there. There are other good venues though. Southpaw and North Six in Brooklyn are good. I miss Brownies, though.

**Lance - Where's your favorite place to eat?**

Greg - I pretty much live at the tex-mex place around the block from my house. I'm not gonna bother name checking it because it's in a lame town on long island that you'll never visit.

**Lance - Do you think it was critical for a lot of you guys to come up through punk and hardcore? How does that add to the character of the band?**

Greg - It was critical for me. I mean we sort of met through that world. I still kind of see us as a punk band even though I'm sure many punk purists would argue that we aren't. For me, the biggest difference between the world we exist in now and the world we



existed in in our punk/hardcore days is that we play nicer rooms, clubs feed us and we actually make a living. But, I'd happily go back to playing DIY. Hardcore shows if Radio 4 ceased to exist. I liked that stuff and I've said a million times that if Radio 4 ever broke up I'd never make another attempt at making music for a living again but I'll never stop playing in bands. I guess it'd probably make me feel old though. About twice a year I'll go to an all ages hardcore show at a VFW hall and I'm always one of the oldest people there.

**Lance - What's the first album you ever bought?**

Greg - Styx - "Paradise Theatre" on 8-track when I was in second grade. First vinyl album was J. Geils Band - "Freeze Frame" (same year).

**Lance - With all the touring, can you still go see a band and enjoy yourself? What do you look for in a live band?**

Greg - I actually really like seeing bands at shows I'm not playing but

I don't do it nearly as often as I used to. Being in a band has ruined music a little for me because I've become really critical of everything and I tend to want to cross-reference everything I hear. But a good band is a good band and I can still get into it. What I look for is sincerity, originality and good songwriting.

**Lance - What current bands do you feel you relate to?**

Greg - I like Hot Snakes, Spoon, Bloc Party, The Arcade Fire, the Futureheads, Ted Leo/Pharmacists, Wrangler Brutes (though, I think they broke up), Deerhoof. I don't know if I'd use the word "relate" but they all do something that rings true with me.

**Lance - Where do you stand on MP3s? What do you think of Soulseek?**

Greg - I share music with friends via mp3 all the time. I mean I used to copy records onto tape all the time so I don't see it as that big a deal. As far as downloading goes, I've had many crazy binges. I kind of stopped buying lots of records years ago, even before I downloaded songs, because I had no money. Now I check bands out by downloading all the time. There's no Soulseek client for Mac so I've never used it. I use Acquisition.

**Lance - Do you think that the format is the death of the art of the album?**

Greg - Not at all. In fact, is still feel strongly about albums. If I can't get every song from an album by downloading I get upset about it and sort of obsessively try to find it so I can listen to it the way it was meant to be heard. Though, it is sort of the death of album artwork, which is kinda lame, but that's been dying since the advent of the compact disc anyway.

**Lance - Do you ever go back and listen to old tuneless hardcore?**

Greg - Frequently. In fact, the day after this tour with Gang Of Four ends, I'm actually playing a show this month with Milhouse, the band I was in before Radio 4. It's pretty chaotic, misanthropic, satanic hardcore stuff.

**Lance - Who are your dream producers? If you could work with anyone, who?**

Greg - Brian Eno, Steve Albini, Andy Gill, Rick Rubin, Nigel Godrich, I don't know. I'm sure there are lots more I'm not thinking of. Really, I'd just like to work with a producer that helps us make a record that actually sounds like we sound live.

**Lance - What musicians would you be interested in collaborating with?**



Greg - I've never really thought about it because we never really did that. Roman's done some stuff with electronic music producers in the last couple of years. True story: we got a call a few years ago from Iggy Pop's management saying that he wanted to work with us on that last record he put out but it never actually happened. In the end he worked with Green Day and Peaches and Sum 41, etc. We were invited to his record release party though. When we met him he told me he'd have much rather worked with us than some of the people his management/record label pushed him to work with. He went on and on about "Gotham!" and what he'd

have wanted to do with us and stuff. Me and Gerard basically smiled like idiots and nodded during this conversation and then totally freaked the fuck out as soon as we walked away.

**Lance - What do you do in your spare time?**

Greg - Sleep, hang out with my girlfriend, read, play video games, geek out on the Internet, watch movies, go to museums. Average stuff I guess.

**Lance - How did you hook up with Mark Stewart?**

Greg - I guess either Anthony or our label in Europe had suggested maybe getting Adrian Sherwood and Mark Stewart to do an On-U style remix. From what I hear they got a little confused because they don't really do remixes. I personally think remixes are usually kinda boring. However, what they did with "Struggle" is far and away the coolest remix ever. It's totally psychotic. I think I like it better than the original. Mark Stewart actually sang that song with us when we played the Scala in London in 2003. It was really strange and really cool. I don't think 85% of the audience had any idea who the Pop Group or Mark Stewart was though, which is too bad for them.

**Lance - Anything else?**

Greg - Hook me up with one of those "Beautiful Frenzy" tapes! I only saw the ex once but it was one of the best shows I've ever seen.



# RUDIMENTARY PENI

*Seriously, what the hell do you have to say to introduce a band like Rudimentary Peni? Hugely influential, deafeningly complex, fearlessly experimental, they are the most important band save Crass to come out of the first wave of anarcho punk in Britain. From their first single to their most recent releases, they've taken a unique path that's been both a challenge to follow and a breath of fresh air in it's aesthetic. This interview was done for my upcoming book "Let The Tribe Increase" documenting much of that scene.*

**Lance** - How did you get into punk rock? How did you first find out about it?

**Grant** - As a teenager in Britain in 1977 it was impossible to avoid it. The impact of the Sex Pistols, The Clash etc. was considerable at that time, and the media was full of it.

**Lance** - Had you been in any bands previous to Rudimentary Peni?

**Grant** - No I had not.

**Lance** - How did you meet the others in the band? What were your first impressions of them?

**Grant** - I met Nick through a friend, and we 'clicked' immediately. Jon and Nick had been at school together.

**Lance** - Had any of the others played in any previous bands?

**Grant** - Jon and Nick had played together in the Magits. Jon had also played for a band called Soft Drinks.

**Lance** - Who exactly were the Magits? What were they like? Who exactly put out their two records?

**Grant** - The Magits only put out one record. At that time they were Nick and a friend of his. They were an avant-garde synthesizer band. They put the record out themselves as the first release on Outer Himalayan Records.

**Lance** - Did anyone else from the band go on to play music?

**Grant** - No.

**Lance** - How much of a gap was there between the Magits and Rudimentary Peni? It seems like they were releasing records in

'80 and Rudimentary Peni started putting out records in '81.

**Grant** - What you've said is correct.

**Lance** - What was the band like in its earliest incarnation? Was there ever a time when you were more of a straightforward garage band?

**Grant** - The first EP is a pretty reasonable representation of what we sounded like from day one.

**Lance** - How did you find out about Crass and the anarcho scene? How did you relate to it early on?

**Grant** - In 1979 I bought "The Feeding of the 5000" and at a similar time Nick saw them live. We didn't really get into the scene until the

winter of 1981 and the opening of the Autonomy Centre in East London. It was really me who was into that scene more than the others.

**Lance** - Did you ever think of yourselves as a punk rock band? What bands were you listening to and what inspired you?

**Grant** - Yes. Inspiration came from the first Damned album, and also a song called "The Bitch" by Slaughter and the Dogs. Also the first two Discharge EPs and the first Wire album. There were many other influences but these were the main ones, at least in the early days.

**Lance** - How did you come up with the band name?

**Grant** - When I was at school studying biology we were told that in the fetal stage the clitoris is a rudimentary penis. Then we had to dissect rabbit's testicles, at which point I fainted. For any deeper explanation you'd have to ask Freud.

**Lance** - What was your early set like? Were there many songs you doing back in the early days that got left behind?

**Grant** - The early set was essentially the first EP plus some of the songs that eventually appeared on Farce. Songs called "Museum" and "Your Tribe" also come from the early days, and found their way onto later albums though in a highly altered state. Not much got left behind.

**Lance** - What were early gigs like? What were some of the bands you were playing with when you started? What made you decide early on to not play many gigs?

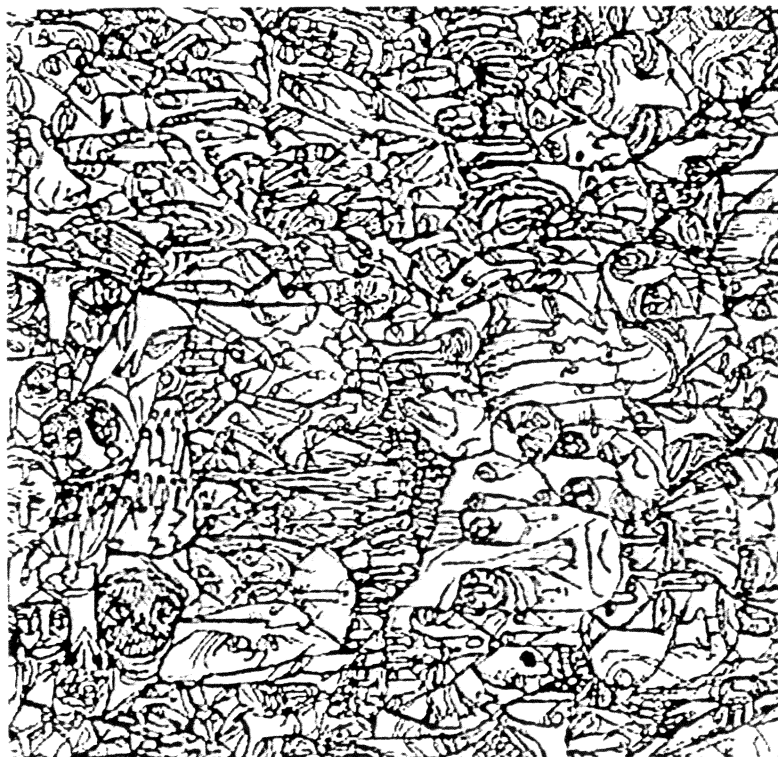
**Grant** - The first gig was a nerve-racking local affair. The second gig was a music competition, and we came joint last. The third gig was in London with Flux of Pink Indians and the Subhumans. After that we did a series of gigs, mostly at anarcho-type venues in London, and these were some of the better ones. Gigs were extremely intense to do, so we didn't

do many.

**Lance** - Who was writing the bulk of the songs at that point? Was it mostly Nick?

**Grant** - In the early years song writing was generally a combined effort, with one providing lyrics and another providing the riff. For example, "Media Person" was Nick's lyrics and my riff. Most of the lyrics on the first EP were Nick's, apart from "Blind Dogs" which was entirely written by me. The lyrics to "B Ward" were to some extent a co-write between me and Nick. Who writes what has varied tremendously over the years, however.

**Lance** - Was he already doing much in terms of artwork?





Grant - Yes. He would spend up to 8 hours a day on art, and then we would practice songs in the evening.

**Lance - Were there any early demo recordings? Did you ever record before the first 7"?**

Grant - Yes, and these early recordings are CRAP.

**Lance - Before your relationship with Crass, had the band had political leanings? Did you think of yourselves as an anarcho band early on?**

Grant - I had political leanings before the relationship with Crass, as shown by "Blind Dogs". We always fought shy of calling ourselves an anarcho band though - my idealism didn't extend quite that far.

**Lance - What were some of your lyrical inspirations? It seems like there was really nothing like or before that first EP.**

Grant - Don't really know where Nick got that early stuff from. I do remember him having a lot of arty books though, and reading things like Blake and Sylvia Plath.

**Lance - What was it like recording that first time? What was it like in the studio?**

Grant - Thrilling and nerve-racking. The studio was a shit-hole, and that was all we could afford. When Nick came to do the vocals I remember

the hippy dude engineer turning to me in horror and saying "he's just bawling into the mike".

**Lance - How did you pick what songs would be on the record?**

Grant - They were pretty much all we had at that time, and in those days of 7 inch vinyl there was a limit to how much you could fit on anyway.

**Lance - What inspired the artwork?**

Grant - I would suggest that the artwork was inspired by Nick's sensitivity and his melancholy.

**Lance - What made you decide to release the first record on your own? How did you pick the name of the label?**

Grant - That's what bands did back then. It was a cheap if rather limited way of getting your stuff out there.

As already stated, the label name was pre-existing, and was perhaps funny, avant-garde and perhaps transcendent.

**Lance - What did you think when you first saw the amazing artwork for the record?**

Grant - I thought it was great, and perfectly suited.

**Lance - How do you reflect back on that record now?**

Grant - Great artwork. Crap recording quality. Great vocals.

**Lance - Was there an immediate response to record upon release?**

Grant - Yes. People on the scene who we played it to generally said it was "brilliant" and "excellent".

**Lance - Were there many reviews? How did the press treat the band?**

Grant - No reviews in the music press, but we never sent them a copy any way.

**Lance - Could you see the difference in the crowds at live**

**shows? Did you tour to support the record?**

Grant - No difference. A small group of anarcho punks liked us, some of whom were friends and had seen us live. As already stated, we gigged from time to time, but did not tour.

**Lance - How did you meet Crass? How was it decided that your second record would be on Crass instead of Outer Himalayan?**

Grant - I went down to Crass's house in the summer of 1981 with someone who was interviewing them. I took along a copy of the first EP, and on hearing it Penny Rimbaud offered us the chance to do a 7 inch on the Crass label. We decided to do the second EP on the Crass label partly because I was heavily into Crass at that time, and partly because we knew it was a chance to reach a wider audience without being ripped off by a shitty "indie" label.

**Lance - Who wrote the songs on this record? Was much of it collaboration?**

Grant - It was not a songwriting collaboration with Crass if that's what you mean.

Slightly more than half the lyrics were mine, whilst riffs came from both me and Nick.

**Lance - What was it like recording at**

**Southern? What was it like recording with Penny? Any memories of being in the studio?**

Grant - For me it was the most exhilarating recording experience that I've had. However, Penny's production style did tend to inhibit Nick's vocal performance. As someone who was 17 at the time, I remember thinking that Penny seemed a lot more easy to be around than many other "older" dudes.

**Lance - How involved were Crass in the whole project? There are many stories of them taking over the artwork. But they obviously let you folks do your own thing.**

Grant - Penny assisted with studio production and mixing. I think Crass did the layout of the artwork, but they did not seek to alter or censor anything that we did. Their only requirement was that the front cover should have that recognizable circular stenciled effect.

**Lance - How did you decide which songs would be on the second EP?**

Grant - Again, they were pretty much all the new ones we had, and there was the vinyl time constraint as well.

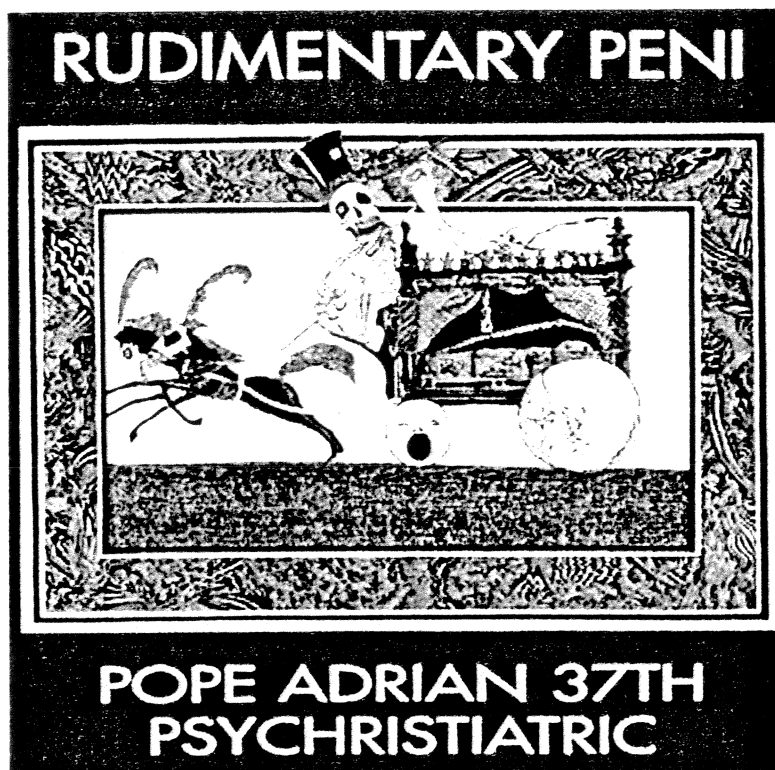
**Lance - What inspired the artwork on the second EP?**

Grant - To some extent it is a reflection of the lyrics, but beyond that I guess you'd have to open up Nick's head to find out any more.

**Lance - Do you think you related to any of the other bands on Crass or in the anarcho scene?**

Grant - We liked the Mob, Rubella Ballet and the Erratics. Above all, however, I thought the Sinyx were awesome, and on a good night they could kick all our butts. I still think their style and chord structures are some of the best that Punk has to offer - inspired simplicity.

**Lance - What was the critical and audience reaction to the second single?**



Grant - The audience liked it and the music press described it as "surprisingly good". It climbed the indie chart, which the first EP did not, and we got a lot of appreciative mail.

**Lance - Did you do any touring to support the record?**

Grant - No. Just occasional gigs as always.

**Lance - Did you ever make it over to the continent in the early days?**

Grant - Never played abroad ever.

**Lance - What were you folks doing when you weren't doing band stuff? Did you all have jobs?**

Grant - Some worked, some did art and I was at school.

**Lance - What was it like recording "Death Church"? What was the mood like at the time?**

Grant - By this time the band had split up, so it was all a bit of a downer. About 2 months earlier I had just recovered from cancer, and so was no longer quite the same naive youth of the previous year. It was quite interesting and rewarding to do, but no longer exhilarating. Doing our own production enabled Nick to return to a less restricted vocal style.

**Lance - What made you call it that?**

Grant - Don't know. That was Nick's idea.

**Lance - Who wrote the material on this record?**

Grant - It was the usual mixture of me and Nick. Of all the things we have recorded, I would say that Death Church is the most democratic, in the sense that it does not come across as being more Nick's project or mine. People think that they can detect which songs were written by me and which were written by Nick, but when tested they often get it wrong, which is interesting.

**Lance - What were some of the inspirations behind the artwork?**

Grant - Don't know - see Nick's brain for further details.

**Lance - Was the additional sheet of political information included to focus on the band's political angle? Was there ever a need to openly declare your political positions in the anarcho scene especially with a band whose lyrics aren't at all sloganeering?**

Grant - Yes. For me music had become to some extent a vehicle for political sentiments, so the two were not separate. I think Nick and Jon just thought the political thing was a load of crap really, and found my ranting and raving both funny and insufferable.

**Lance - How long did it take to record that record?**

Grant - 2 days to record. 2 days to mix.

**Lance - Were you already coming down ill while working on the record?**

Grant - Not whilst recording it. Whilst writing some of it I was going through the fight for survival. At least one of the songs on that album was written by me whilst sitting in a cancer ward wired up to a drip. Other tracks go back to the Farce era, such as "Inside" and "Dutchmen".

**Lance - Could you talk a little about your health condition at the time? I remember hearing rumors all the time that you had died. Punks are morbid.**

Grant - It was cancer. I fought hard and survived. That's all I can say really, except that I've never been able to shake off the sense of mortality since.

**Lance - Did you get to play any gigs to support the record**

**before you became ill?**

Grant - Again - the illness was before the recording of Death Church, not after.

**Lance - Do you remember the response to the record?**

Grant - The music press liked it, and it made it to number one in the indie chart in the summer of 1983. I think some fans found it rather heavy going, which is how it was meant to be.

**Lance - How exactly did the band gain such a cult status? What do you think were the factors behind that?**

Grant - The main factors were Nick's originality, my politics and the fact that all 3 of us could make quite a sound when we played. The "cult" aspect is also a reflection of the fact that there was something about our sound that was rarely commercial.

**Lance - Around that time, a live EP came out. Any ideas on how that happened?**

Grant - No idea. It's a bootleg and nothing to do with us. I've never even heard it.

**Lance - I know around this time, Nick had done artwork for Part 1 and Icons of Filth. Do you know of any other bands he did artwork for at the time? Did anyone play any music during the hiatus?**

Grant - No artwork for other bands. Jon always played drums for loads of bands, including a band called Snakecore.

**Lance - While you were ill, was there any question about the band's future?**

Grant - I don't know. If I hadn't survived they might have drafted someone else in to do the bass I guess.

**Lance - In 1987, you released the collection of both singles. Was this because the records were becoming collector's items or was it because you wanted people reintroduced to the band before "Cacophony"?**

Grant - It had nothing to do with Cacophony, because that was not yet conceived at that time. Southern Studios were in the process of deleting some of the Crass Records back catalogue, but felt that our stuff was worth continuing with.

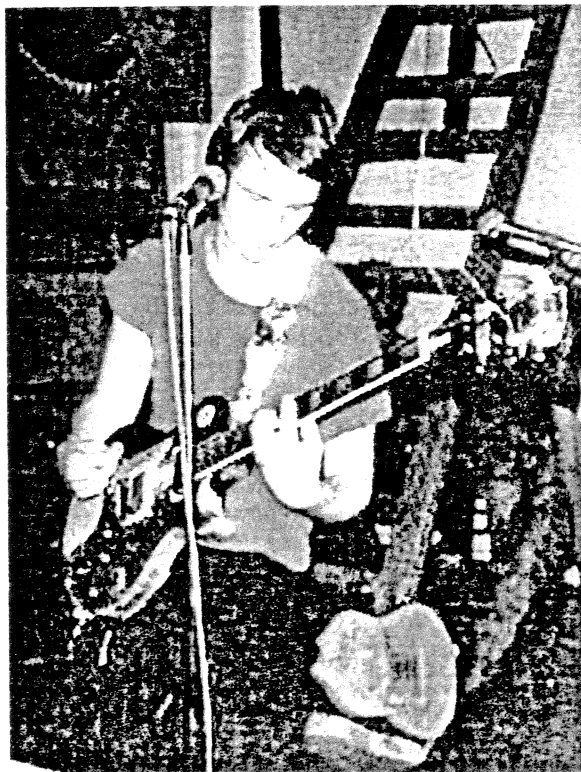
**Lance - Why did you decide to do it with Crass? Why didn't you want to do anything else with them afterwards?**

Grant - I think you'll find that the EP re-issue was on Outer Himalayan. The CD version certainly is. Either way, Southern had taken over distribution of our first EP even before Farce was recorded, so there was always a lot of flexibility under the Southern umbrella. It was only ever our intention to do one record on Crass in order to reach a wider audience before reclaiming full control over production. Some bands have expressed mixed feelings about working with Crass records, but I have nothing but praise and gratitude for what they did for us. They were a help and certainly not a hindrance in my opinion.

**Lance - In 1989 you released "Cacophony". Was this intentionally meant as a break from all punk and rock n roll con-**

**ventions?**

Grant - I've never really seen it that way. It's a strange record in terms of its overall sound but its structures are really quite conventional. Perhaps it's the presence of classical elements that makes you describe it in the way that you have. I personally think the first half of it is quite impressive at times, whereas the second half





sucks.

**Lance** - What was the idea behind an album dedicated to HP Lovecraft? What in particular inspired you about him and his stories?

**Grant** - That was Nick's thing. It was him who was into Lovecraft.

**Lance** - What was it like recording the record? It seems like an especially deranged affair? Was it at all a relief to get the band going again?

**Grant** - It was cold. I was in the middle of a relationship break-up and the coldness of the studio just served to emphasize the grimness for me. Nick's vocal performances were genuinely rather unsettling at times.

**Lance** - How did you come up with the songs? Was there much collaboration? What were you listening to at the time?

**Grant** - The entire album was written and rehearsed within 3 months. The lyrics were essentially Nick's, whilst a lot of riffs and ideas were contributed by me. I had got into Beethoven, Handel etc. by that point.

**Lance** - How did people respond to the band live? How did the new material go over?

**Grant** - We never played live at that time.

**Lance** - What was the press reaction to that record?

**Grant** - I think it was Kerrang magazine who loved it but called it "commercial suicide". They were right about that. Of everything we've done, Cacophony has been the worst seller.

**Lance** - Did you ever feel like at this point you were going out of your way to cultivate the cult image?

**Grant** - Not really, though there was something rather deliberately arty about it. If 'Farce' can be said to bear the stamp of my personality, then Cacophony can be said to represent more of Nick's approach to what we do.

**Lance** - Did you ever get much response from HP Lovecraft followers?

**Grant** - Not much. A few said they were into it.

**Lance** - You didn't release another record for six more years. Is there something about the number six that makes you take off that much time between records? Was Nick really in an insane asylum during that period?

**Grant** - No. Yes, Nick had terrible problems during the first half of the 1990s, though things seemed to have stabilized since then.

**Lance** - What exactly was the situation with that? How was he diagnosed? There are a million rumors.

**Grant** - Nothing to add on this point, except to say that I have known Nick for over 20 years, and throughout that period he has been one of the most perceptive people I have ever encountered, particularly when it comes to the question of human motivations.

**Lance** - What did you think of "Primal Screamer"? How accurate do you think it was in actually depicting his life?

**Grant** - It is a strange mixture of fact, fantasy and fiction. Some of it I liked. Some of it was too surreal for me.

**Lance** - How closely were you in contact during this time?

**Grant** - That book was written in the mid 1980s during a 5 year period when we were not in contact at all.

**Lance** - What made him decide to write a book?

**Grant** - Cathartic I guess in the wake of the Peni split.

**Lance** - What lead to the recording of "Pope Adrian 37th"? Had you always intended on keeping the band alive?

**Grant** - We had never intended to keep the band alive. It was more a question of the enthusiasm coming and going, as well as health considerations. That album was just part of that cycle.

**Lance** - What was the idea behind the title? Did you want to start maintaining a concept with each record?

**Grant** - Pope Adrian was the only ever English Pope, who lived many hundreds of years ago and came from the village where Nick lives. To be a Pope at that time was the equivalent of being a Roman or Chinese emperor, or in the present day, the president of the U.S., i.e. a politically significant dude. The whole concept was bound up with delusions that Nick had suffered during a breakdown. There does seem to be a tendency to have certain themes with each record, though this was not always the intention.

**Lance** - What was it like being back in the studio as a band? How did you write the songs? Am I right in thinking this is when you started writing the bulk of the material? How much of it was written in the previous six years?

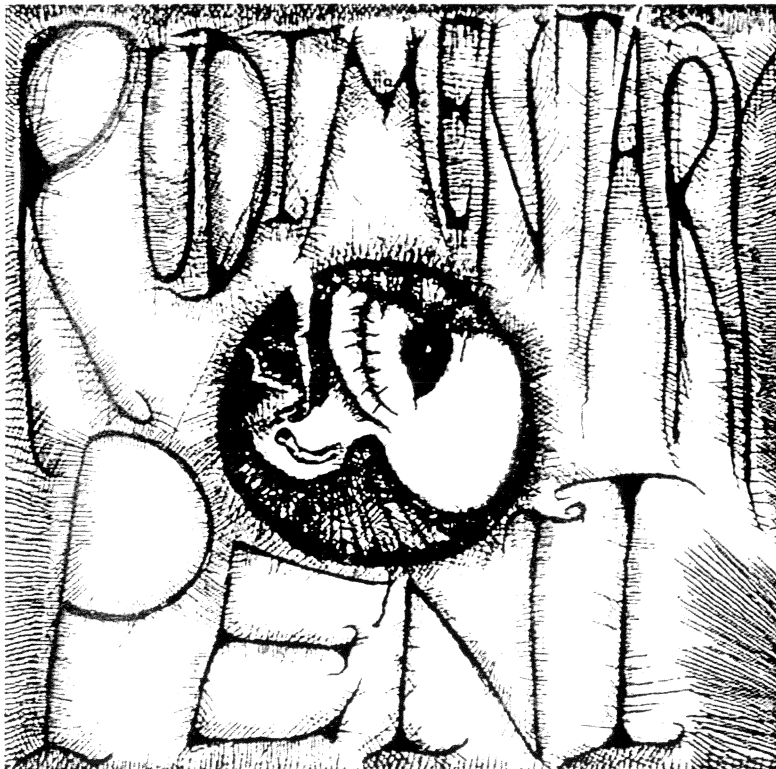
**Grant** - It was just another session. I don't have many particular memories of it, except that Jon said at the end of the session that he didn't think the songs were that good. The riffs were written over a long period of time. In fact, one of the riffs went back as far as the early Magits days.

**Lance** - This time, you did do more touring behind the record. What were the live dates like? Why did you decide to make the band a touring group again?

**Grant** - Some of the gigs were the pits. One in particular was one of the worst we ever did. Others were OK, whilst the gig we did in Derby had an incredible atmosphere, with people screaming stuff at us like "You're fucking brilliant!!!" Some people who turned up late at that gig and missed our set trashed the place. One of the other gigs suffered a power failure moments before we went on. Chaos ensued, and the management were so disgusted with our fans that they banned us from ever playing there again. We thought we would try gigging again, partly to promote the record, but also because it had become economically viable, unlike the early days when it would usually end up costing us money.

**Lance** - A lot of people thought of this record as a sort of return to form for the band. Do you think that's at all true considering the songwriting was pretty different?

**Grant** - Jon and I thought the record was CRAP, as did Southern Studios. None of us wanted to release it, except Nick, so in the interests of open-mindedness we opted to release it anyway. I personally still think it's crap, but it sells better than Cacophony - explain that if you can! It's worth remembering of course that at the time of their release, every record we've done has been consid-



ered crap by somebody or other.

**Lance - What was it like relating to the new punk scene of the '90s?**

Grant - 90s Punk is crap. It has soft jangly bits in it to make it easy for the listeners. Either that or it sounds like heavy metal. The last decent Punk record was The Sinyx "Black Death" EP from 1982. Although the vocals on much of this record are too soft, the track called "Zulu" goes some way to capturing that band's greatness. In other words, we didn't relate to the 90s scene. We just did what we wanted to do.

**Lance - How did you pick what songs would be on the record?**

Grant - As ever, it was pretty much what we had written at that time.

**Lance - How did people respond to the new record and the band being back again?**

Grant - As with all our later stuff, people didn't respond very much at all. We were neither deluged with complaints nor praise - indifference, so often indifference!!

**Lance - Why did you take off so much time before going back in to record "Echoes of Anguish"? What were some of the ideas that lead to you doing a 12" EP?**

Grant - I think we were so pissed off with the aforementioned indifference that we lost enthusiasm again for a long while. "Echoes of Anguish" was my project, entirely written by me. I decided it was time to take the band and give it a kick up its fat middle-aged backside. As part of that I decided to write small amounts of material over a period of at least 2 years if not more, and to weed out any crap, so that what found its way onto the record was only the very best I could write at that time.

**Lance - What was it like recording this time around? How did you relate to what was happening in music at the end of the '90s and the punk explosion?**

Grant - It was good - a kind of controlled intensity. We had a different engineer, who did a good job, and we took about 3 days in total to record and mix it. We did not relate to the music scene at that time, though Jon perhaps still had some interest in newer bands I think.

**Lance - Did you feel like your record had any relationship with what was happening with punk at the time or was it any sort of response to it?**

Grant - It was a response in the sense that it was an attempt to get back to basics - to study some of the more progressive aspects of Death Church and Farce, and attempt to improve on them. In other words it was more of a reference to our own stuff than anything else.

**Lance - Did you ever feel like the bleak message of your records was an attack on the commercial pop sensibilities of '90s new punk?**

Grant - Not really. The bleak message is my attempt to describe as accurately as possible the reality of human existence, i.e. the fact that it is suffering covered with a thin veneer of lies.

**Lance - Did you tour much to support the record?**

Grant - Not at all.

**Lance - Last year, you released a new 7", "The Underclass". What brought you back together to record an EP?**

Grant - See question 78. In addition to this, it was an attempt to study some of the more progressive aspects of Echoes of Anguish, and attempt to improve on them. We had already planned to do another EP after "Echoes". It was just a matter of taking a couple of years to do the best we could. Again, "the Underclass" was entirely written by me.

**Lance - What was it like recording this time around?**

Grant - It was good. We used the same engineer as last time, and we had got more used to each other by then. Personally, I think "the Underclass" is the best thing we've done to date.

**Lance - Do you still find many of your original supporters are still turning up at gigs or is a new generation every decade?**

Grant - We don't do gigs any more. However, people who contact us about our stuff vary from those who were into us from the beginning to others who were not even born when the first EP

came out!!

**Lance - What do you feel is the importance of being in an anarcho punk band today?**

Grant - None whatsoever. All that matters is to improve the songs, describe reality, and try to give a bit of depth to the lyrics. You could also argue that the existence of this band does at least amount to a few misfits finding some sort of public voice.

**Lance - Do you feel like you still have the same general ideals as you did when the band first started?**

Grant - Nick and Jon never did. I no longer see music as a serious vehicle for political discussion. I have also come to feel that when there is a tension between the desires of the individual and the wider agenda of social justice, the individual must give way. Real revolutionary politics is Lenin or Mao, not rock music. I would concede, however, that music can sometimes start the process of a person's politicization. However, it cannot complete it.

**Lance - With all the health problems both physically and mentally, does the band offer relief from daily life or is it a hassle at times?**

Grant - It's a hassle at times, but it's something "creative" to do. Besides which, we write and record so infrequently that it's never too much of a problem, except in the run up to recording, when we have to do intensive practicing.

**Lance - How do you reflect on the changes that the band has gone through and the changes in the audiences throughout the years? Do you look at what you've done as one body of work or do you feel each record is it's own entity responding static to those times?**

Grant - In my opinion, Cacophony and Pope Adrian were a mistake or a diversion. We don't bother to consider audience trends or whatever, and were always considered by people on the scene to be a bunch of uncool weirdos anyway. I try not to think of the records in terms of when they came out, because nostalgic associations will mean nothing to future generations, as exemplified by fans who were too young to remember the release of Death Church, and to whom the early 80s anarcho scene means nothing.

**Lance - Do you think of yourselves as a cult band or a punk band?**

Grant - A punk band who don't sell many records!!

**Lance - How do you reflect on the early days of the band and the '80s anarcho scene?**

Grant - I was 15 when the band started, and 18 when we recorded Death Church, so for me that whole period is tied up with the bleak, intense and depressing teenage thing (as opposed to the bleak, intense and depressing middle age thing!).

**Lance - Do you think the anarcho scene had a major impact on society or the music industry or was it all just naïve?**

Grant - No impact and all naïve. So-called "indie" labels have long since been colonized by the majors - a process that was already well under way 20 years ago.

**Lance - What are some of your best memories of the old days?**

Grant - Losing my virginity.

**Lance - What are some of the worst?**

Grant - Losing my virginity.

**Lance - Any last band stories or rumors to be put to rest?**

Grant - In August 2002 we are recording another EP, called "Archaic". It should be a further improvement on "The Underclass". Nick has contributed 2 sets of lyrics and one riff to this record, so that's a development. The line up of the band has been the same on all the records we've done. The creative input into this band has always been equally split between me and Nick, with me as the founder member. It is wrong to think of this band as simply a vehicle for Nick's output. This is a myth that seems to have taken hold in recent years. Half the stuff is written by me - got it?!!!! - good!

# X-CRETAS

X-Cretas, as silly as they may have been at times, were a cornerstone of the Gravesend punk scene that produced bands like Anthrax, the Naked and the Pits. Trev is a great guy and a fine example of someone who has maintained his original ideals and most of his sanity and is still involved in the anarcho punk scene in London today via Active Slaughter.

**Lance - How did you get into punk rock? How did you first hear of it and what made you want to get involved?**

Trev - It's the classic old reason as to how/why I got into punk, which I'm sure is the same for thousands of other people. I saw the Pistols on the TV and was totally blown away so, being a 14/15 year old kid and reaching that "rebellious against everything" stage that most prepubescent teenage kids do, it seemed the perfect medium to vent my spleen. It was just so different, so dangerous and, of course, parents hated it which is reason enough to like anything I feel ☺. I have to admit that at that time I didn't really have much of a spleen to vent but through reading about the various original punk bands and listening to the lyrics etc, it soon became apparent to me that there was a fuck of a lot of things to be angry about. It also became apparent that punk was also very accessible, with its general ethos that "anyone can do it" and to a kid with no musical talent whatsoever that was a real godsend.

**Lance - What made you want to start playing music? Was it something you always wanted to do or was it inspired by punk rock?**

Trev - My "musical career" was most definitely inspired by punk. Up to that point I had never even slightly entertained the idea of doing anything musically. I liked music but there really was the feeling that in order to play it you had to take music lessons or practice religiously for 25 years or...well, basically, that only certain "special" types of people could do it. Punk just blew all of that away and, as I've said, to a snotty nosed 15 year old such a thing really was "music to my ears" (pun fully intended ☺).

**Lance - What was the music scene like where you were from?**

Trev - Well, pre-punk it was the usual old thing; lots of long haired bands either doing a set of cover versions or self-penned stuff with the obligatory 15 minute guitar break in the middle. Boring shit basically. Post punk though it was...well, it was pretty much the same actually. What can I say, Gillingham's never been renowned for keeping up with the times ☺. Okay, I'm taking the piss a bit here (not much though) but there seriously wasn't much of an uptake of punk initially, but fortunately that slowly changed and within a couple of months a few bands did start to appear and a punk scene did start to evolve.

**Lance - What were some of the other local bands you were into at the time?**

Trev - Well these are the ones I remember, I'm sure there were probably others but I'm an old bastard and thus my memory's a bit dodgy (to say the least)... Naked, The Committed, The Accursed, TDA, The Pits, Sulphate, Anthrax, The Pop Rivets (they were known as a punk band back then), The Dead Birds.

**Lance - Had you been in any other bands before X-Cretas?**

Trev - Nope. Pre X-cretas I was a musical virgin. Coincidentally I took up smoking after our first practice ☺

**Lance - How did you meet the folks from X-Cretas? How did the band form? Was that in 1980?**

Trev - Again, the classic old story. The X-Cretas was a bunch of 4 mates who, on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1980 decided that they'd had enough of sitting around saying "we could do that" and got off their arses and actually did it. On that particular fateful day I turned up late for the meeting we'd decided to have to sort out who'd play what and the other 3 had already bagsied their instruments, leaving me to be on drums whether I liked it or not. The bastards ☺

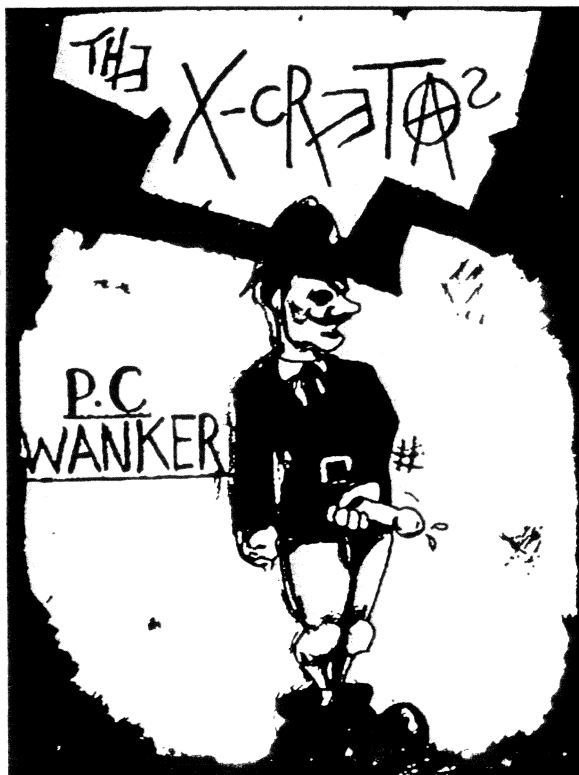
**Lance - What was the meaning behind the name?**

Trev - Simple - it was kinda shocking, rude and would piss off "old people" - that was partly what punk seemed to be about to us back then. It's also quite humorous I think and allowed us to come up with a couple of quite brilliant slogans such as "Shit Music For Shit People" and "X-Cretas, Fuck The Cistern". There was always an element of humour in what we did.

**Lance - Was there ever a time when you were more of a straightforward punk band and not interested in the anarcho scene?**

Trev - Definitely. When we first started it was Don on vocals, Bill (Don's brother) on guitar, Loz on bass and me on drums. We were all into more or less the same stuff but Don was really into the Pork Dukes at that time whereas the rest of us were being drawn to the more political, anarcho side of things. Subsequently our first real set of songs were a bit of a mish mash of "humorous" stuff (I still cringe at some of the things that we considered funny back then but hey, what

do you expect from a bunch of 14/15 year old oiks ☺ - thank fuck I've grown up a bit is all I can say) and stuff that tended to veer down the anarcho road. A bit like Peter And The Test Tube Babies meets Crass. It was good. It was fun. But as me, Bill and Loz began to get more and more into Crass and the like we knew we couldn't really continue doing the cheap Pork Dukes imitations. That's ultimately why Don left.



**Lance** - How did you get interested in the anarcho scene? What specifically drew you too it and what were your initial impressions?

**Trev** - Well there's only one real answer to that and that's Crass. I honestly don't think I've ever experienced the excitement and "hairs-standing-up-on-the-back-of-your-neck" intoxicating exhilaration that I felt when I first heard and read the lyrics to Feeding Of The 5,000. I've said that the Pistols were new and exciting, well "Feeding" took things to a completely new plain of excitement for me. As I recently heard Noodles Romanov from Bug Central say ; the Pistols introduced us to anarchy but Crass actually explained what it meant. It perhaps seems a bit jaded and dated to some people now but at that time "Feeding" was totally original, there was nothing else like it. I know it sounds like pretentious crap but that album played a great part in shaping the way I am today - my political leanings, my attitudes toward music, everything! I still listen to it to this day, and there aren't many albums I can say that about. I know that some people, both then and now, accuse Crass of basically being doom and gloom merchants but to me they were inspiring, positive, they made you feel like you were part of something and that you could initiate some form of change. These feelings became amplified when other bands such as DIRT, Conflict, Subhumans, Flux etc began to appear. That's when I really began to feel that I was involved in something. Ah, those were the days ☺.

**Lance** - What did you think of Crass and what were your impressions of them like?

**Trev** - Well I think I've more or less just answered that. But what's also got to be remembered was that Crass wasn't just about the band. Crass, to me, signify a whole host of other things such as truly independent record labels, helping lesser known bands (with their Bullshit Detector series for example), complete DIY gigs with no bouncers etc, the re-birth of CND, the artwork of G, the films they showed at their gigs. Crass was always about more than a bunch of people bashing out what in reality is pretty straightforward punk rock stuff on a stage. I suppose, quite ironically, you could say that they were the first band to deliver a complete musical package - the record covers, the films, the posters and artwork - stuff that the PR men of today's pop bands try so desperately to sell to "the kids". I can only really say that seeing Crass was truly an "experience". One that lifted me up, was inclusive, friendly and made me want to get involved in some way.

**Lance** - Did you start off doing all original material or did you ever do covers?

**Trev** - As I've said, our earliest stuff was a bit of a mish mash of things. I'd say that about 85% of what we did was original stuff but we did do a few covers including, if memory serves, "Melody Makers" by the Pork Dukes, "Something Else" by Eddie Cochran and a bastardised version of "The Wanderer" by Dion which we re-titled "Dirty Cunt" of which I'm sure you can guess the lyrical content. Now you know why I cringe sometimes when I look back at our humble beginnings ☺

**Lance** - What were the first gigs like? Where did you start playing first?

**Trev** - Just like most bands I'm sure, our first gigs were played in our local town (Gillingham in Kent) and surrounding areas, to a bunch of mates. They were good, a lot of fun and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves.

**Lance** - How did the crowds respond to what you were doing?

**Trev** - It's hard to say. I know that initially we were just playing for the sake of playing - the buzz of being on stage - so in a way it's quite possible that any message we might have been trying to convey got lost a bit in the sheer excitement and fun of it all. Like I say, it's hard to know why people responded the way they did. All I know is that people danced and seemed to enjoy themselves. I don't remember anyone coming up to me afterwards and saying they really liked the lyrical content of any particular song. I think though that after Don left and we started to play with more overtly political bands (and we became more political ourselves) outside of

our immediate circle of friends and venues, people might have been more responsive to our lyrics, but that might just be wishful thinking on my part because I've certainly not got any real evidence to support it.

**Lance** - What songs were part of your initial set? Was there any sort of lyrical theme to your earliest music?

**Trev** - I won't bore you with a complete list of all the songs we did in our original formation, but looking at the list I have from back then I'd say our initial set consisted of about 65% "political" songs and 35% "humorous" or cover songs. For example, we had songs entitled P.C. Wanker, Army Lies, War, Fascist Pigs, God Save Us -

which are representative of our more political stuff - and Eddie Zodiac, Melody Makers (by the Pork Dukes) and Something Else (Eddie Cochran) which reflected our more humorous side.

**Lance** - Who were some of the bands you played with when you started? Were there any bands at the time that you felt especially close with?

**Trev** - I consider the period "when we started" to be when Don (the original vocalist) was in the band, and in that time we played with the likes of Naked, The Committed, The Accursed and The Pits. I wouldn't say we felt especially close to any of them other than to the extent that we were mates with all of them.

**Lance** - What exactly was your relationship with bands like Anthrax and Antisect? Had you had mutual members from the start?

**Trev** - I'll deal with the Antisect connection first. After we split in 1982 Loz, the bassist, went on to join Antisect. I don't know exactly when that was because we kinda lost touch with each other as he went travelling around the country and I stayed in Gillingham. As for the Anthrax thing, there's a couple of connections. After Don left and I took over on vocals we obviously needed a drummer. We'd played in Gravesend (Kent) quite a lot by then and had got to know the members of Anthrax who were from around there (I'd like to say we inspired them to form a band, but I doubt that's true ☺). Pete, their drummer, volunteered his services and hence the connection was made. As well as Anthrax's guitarist Dee also joining us in our third incarnation - when Bill left - one other connection is that myself and Noodles Romanov (himself a Gravesend lad) from Bug Central also did backing shouting on the first Anthrax demo.





Whether this was before or after Pete had joined us I really can't remember (in fact I can't actually remember being on the Anthrax demo – too pissed probably – but everyone assures me I was)

**Lance - What was it like recording your first demo?**

Trev - Exciting. I distinctly remember us taking all our gear on the train down to the neighbouring town of Strood – no mean feat – and going into the "studio" which in reality was some bloke's cellar where he had a few bits and pieces of recording gear. Of course none of us realised at the time that as far as studios go this was probably the worst one on the entire planet, quite simply because we were naive and just too excited at getting our stuff onto tape (though I suppose the fact it only cost £28 to do should have been some kind of indicator). It was a good, fun experience, even though the resultant tape was complete shit (for which we can't entirely blame the studio – I, for example, am crap on it).

**Lance - What were the songs on that tape?**

Trev - Okay, here goes...it was recorded on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1982 and the songs are... War, Clone Fashion, Fascist Pigs, 666, Pre-Menstrual Tension, PC Wanker, Army Lies, Grim Reaper and Let's Dance (originally by Chris Montez, I think). And before you ask, the reason that Pre-Menstrual Tension is so called is quite simply because we didn't have a name for it and someone just said let's call it that. The name bears no connection at all with the lyrics, it was just us being stupid.

**Lance - What were some of the songs about? Do you remember many of the lyrics?**

Trev - I think the song titles pretty much reveal the lyrical content (aside from PMT of course ☺). It's worth bearing in mind that by this time we were all big Crass and Discharge fans so it's not really that hard to guess what we were singing about. I can actually remember quite a lot of the lyrics. In fact, quite recently I did a copy of it for a friend and found that I could virtually sing along with the whole thing.

**Lance - How did people react to the tape? How did you feel with how it turned out?**

Trev - Our first demo was shit, pure and simple. It and our second demo were released on BBP Tapes over here a couple of years ago and in the sleeve notes I refer to it as "a bloke talking to the accompaniment of a swarm of busily buzzing bees" which is a pretty fair assessment I think. The general consensus amongst those who heard it was pretty much the same.

**Lance - What did you do with it? Was it sold at shows or was it for compilations? Was it part of a plan to sign to a label?**

Trev - We didn't really do anything with it (except cringe ☺) other than to give it to a few mates. I don't personally remember us doing it with the intended desire of signing for a label or anything – though that might have been a possibility I suppose. I just remember wanting to do it to finally get some of our stuff on tape. As far as I know it was never used for anything, compilations or otherwise. I guess it's not until relatively recently in my musical "career" that I've consciously thought about recording something specifically with the intention of possibly doing something more with it than just listening to it at home or giving it to mates etc.

**Lance - Do you feel like it was representative of your live**

**sound at the time?**

Trev - Not really. We weren't particularly great live (okay, but not brilliant) but we certainly weren't as dire as that tape.

**Lance - Did you tour much? Did you make any trips to the continent?**

Trev - We didn't tour at all. I think the furthest we ever got outside of Kent was London. I don't really know why that was. We were lazy bastards I suppose. In fact it's only now, 20 years on, that I'm finally gonna get to play outside of the UK when my new band, Active Slaughter (excuse the cheap plug ☺), play 3 dates in Finland, ironically enough with Oi Polloi and Conflict.

**Lance - Were there many line-up changes over the course of the group's existence?**

Trev - A few. The various line-ups go something like this...

24<sup>th</sup> August 1980 – April/May 1981

Don – Vocals

Loz – Bass

Bill – Guitar

Me – Drums

Mid 1981 – February 1982

Me – Vocals

Loz – Bass

Bill – Guitar

Pete (from Anthrax) – Drums

August 1982 – 28<sup>th</sup> August 1982

Me – Vocals

Loz – Bass

Jess – Drums



Dee (also from Anthrax) – Guitar

**Lance - What was it like recording the second demo?**

Trev - My memories of this are a bit alcohol tainted. I think we did it in the same place Anthrax did theirs and I remember thinking that this one had to be better than our first abomination. Aside from that my only other real memory of that demo was Jess our drummer throwing up over himself in the studio. Maybe all the alcohol worked because the second demo pisses all over the first one.

**Lance - How long after the first one did you record again?**

Trev - I always thought it was about a year later...which just shows

how fucked my memory is because it was only 8 months later (30<sup>th</sup> October 1982 to be precise)

**Lance - What songs were on the second tape?**

Trev - God Save Us, Mary Whitehouse, Who Is Mad, Politics, Familiarity, Locked Away, PC Wanker and Cyanide (by The Lurkers). For the record, Locked Away is my all time favourite X-cretas song.

**Lance - What were some of the songs about? Do you remember any of the lyrics?**

Trev - Aside from Cyanide (I was a big Lurkers fan) all the songs are political in some sense. A quick example...Familiarity is about the way in which war, death and other tragedies appear so common place, so "familiar" through the media etc that we actually start

to become complacent about them, even contemptuous to a degree. I'm not sure I actually managed to convey that properly in the lyrics but that's what I was endeavouring to say. And again, just as with the first demo, I can actually remember virtually all the lyrics.

**Lance - How would you characterize the growth in song writing between the two?**

Trev - I'm not really sure about this. I think essentially the messages that we were trying to convey in the songs on both demos were the same, and whilst I'd like to think that we had "progressed" a little in our song writing capabilities, I don't actually think there's a great deal of difference between the first and second set of songs.

Looking back on them now I don't actually think they're that good lyrically, inasmuch as they don't really capture what I know I was trying to convey. For example, recently my last band (Bug Central) decided they wanted to do Who Is Mad from the second demo and asked me for the lyrics. When I showed them to them, Noodles decided not to bother as the lyrics were too much like a kinda "knee-jerk" reaction, and I can see exactly what he means - my song writing capabilities weren't good enough to pull it off and the song does sound a bit like it was written by a tabloid reading, "hang 'em high" idiot, which I and the band most definitely weren't/aren't.

**Lance - How did people react to the new tape?**

Trev - I think the words "it's nothing like your last one...thank fuck" were used quite a lot. It definitely got a much better reception than the first one. People actually liked this one!

**Lance - Was this one sold at shows?**

Trev - I can't honestly remember...quite possibly. As I've said, at that time I was never really concerned about selling it etc, I just wanted stuff on a tape.

**Lance - Was there ever talk about an X-Cretas record of any sort? What compilations did you appear on?**

Trev - Not that I'm aware of. We did appear on one compilation LP entitled "Wet Dreams" with the songs Familiarity and God Save Us (actually called "It's Our Life" on the album, for reasons unknown). I've still got a clipping from the music paper Sounds which refers to our contributions thus... "Even the absurdly named X-cretas are listenable" and "the second side is as good, except for the X-cretas abysmal "It's Our Life"". Who the fuck is Spike Sommer (the reviewer) anyway!

**Lance - What led to the band finally calling it a day?**

Trev - I just got fed up with it. I honestly can't remember why. I do remember telling Loz - the only other original member and one of my best mates - and I think I'm right in saying that whilst he was a bit upset by my decision he kinda knew it was gonna happen. All I know is that it was nothing personal against anybody, I'd just had enough. That's when Loz decided to go travelling with the convoys that had begun to emerge around that time (the ones that sewed the seeds of what became known as "rave culture" by the media in later years). I think Dee went back full time to Anthrax and Jess went...well, Jess went back to being Jess.

**Lance - Are you still in touch with many of the former members?**

Trev - I still see Bill the original guitarist quite a lot...he's one of my closest mates. Occasionally I see Jess and very, very occasionally

I see Loz. The last time I saw him was about 4 or 5 years ago and I hadn't seen him for about 10 years prior to that. He's in London somewhere so I'll catch up with him again soon and we can do that "aaahhhh, do you remember when...." thing again ☺

**Lance - Did any of you form other bands after the split?**

Trev - As far as I know I was the only one who did. Loz joined Antisect, Dee went back to Anthrax I think but none of them actually started new bands...or at least not that I'm aware of. After a couple of years of not doing much, I hooked up with the afore mentioned Noodles Romanov and we spent the last 10 or so years (maybe more) in various incarnations of the band that ultimately became

Bug Central which I left, perfectly amicably, about a year and a half ago until being roped in to do my latest band Active Slaughter.

**Lance - How do you reflect back on X-Cretas and the music you made?**

Trev - This is what goes through my mind when I think of the X-cretas; I cringe at the first demo. I'm not a big fan of my own voice (who is?) so I'm not a big fan of our second demo which is infinitely better than the first. I remember having a great time in the band. I also remember getting pissed a lot (hey, I was a 16/17 year old kid, what do you expect). I think we had some pretty

good songs and I'd actually love to do "Locked Away" with Active Slaughter. I'm fucking glad I did what I did and, as corny as it sounds, they really were the starting block of the ideals I still believe in as regards my musical "career". I honestly don't think I would change a single thing concerning that era at all.

**Lance - How do you reflect back on the whole anarcho scene? Do you think it did make a challenge to the system or was it mostly naive or was it mostly false?**

Trev - I think I'd answer that in pretty much the same way as the previous question. Perhaps nostalgia by its nature only allows us to remember the good bits, I don't know. But I do know that for all the shit that was thrown at the anarcho scene from every direction - including other "punks" (i.e., The Exploited) - and for all the grief that ultimately ensued (see the answer below), I would not change any of it. It was often scary and threatening, due to "outsiders", but there was also a very great feeling of unity and inclusion, or at least that's what I got from it. I also had a lot of fun, which is an absolute necessity in everything I do concerning music. It is possible to have the politics and the party!

As for whether it did make a challenge to the system? Who can say? Crass got mentioned in Parliament. They were harassed by the Old Bill. Is that a threat to the system? I don't know. I do know however that the anarcho scene spawned me and, I'm sure, a hell of a lot of others who, be it through music or any other medium, do voice some form of dissent against the system we find ourselves in, be it then or now, some 20 odd years later. There's a danger that we limit the "80's anarcho scene" to exactly that - the 1980's, when in reality there are still people being inspired in some way by the likes of Crass *et al* so in that sense I suppose you could say that yes, it did/does challenge the system in some way. I don't think the bands involved in the anarcho scene then were naive in what they thought or wrote about, but I guess you could say that perhaps there was a sense of naivety involved in believing that the state would allow them to do so without throwing a lot of weight



behind stopping them.

As for falseness, again I would say that at the time the bands were pretty much genuine in what they sang about. I don't honestly think that within that particular circle, at that time, anyone got up on a stage and sang about things they didn't really believe in. You have to remember that there was a whole lot of pretty heavy harassment from various sources going on at that time and I'm sure that anyone who didn't totally believe in what they were doing would/did soon get out of it. That's not to say that people didn't later on change or modify what they thought, said, did and which, with hindsight, might give the impression of some form of falseness, but I would definitely say that as far as I could tell all the "major" bands from that time were genuine in what they did.

**Lance - What are some of your best and worst memories from back then?**

Trev - I'm not really sure why but many of my memories of the early 80's are of when violence ensued before, during or after certain gigs - nearly all of those being Crass gigs. Actually, make that ALL of those being Crass gigs. It's a bit odd really as I basically hate violence, except where absolutely necessary (not because I'm a pacifist, because I'm not, but because I can run better than I can punch). In a kinda perverse sense then I suppose my best memories - the ones I bore the young punks down the pub with as I sip upon my half a mild - *should* actually be my worst ones. Ah, it's a funny old world. However, I do have one ever lasting memory of a gig that didn't involve any kind of violence, except perhaps an aural attack on my eardrums, and that was of seeing Discharge at the 100 Club in London sometime in the early 80's (before they went shit sub heavy metal). Now, I'm sure many bands lay claim to being "the loudest band in the world" and who knows, maybe they are, but that night I remember leaving the gig and thinking that my ears were actually bleeding. At the end of their set they did the classic "let's create a fuck of a lot of feedback by putting the guitar in front of the amp" trick that all self respecting noise merchants are obliged to do as they leave the stage. A distorted-to-buggery Discharge guitar in front of a loud-as-fuck Discharge amp; I'm sure you can imagine the crescendo of white noise that ensued. It was excellent! Then they came back on and did an encore of...oh, I don't know, but as they were/are one of my all time favourite bands, I'm sure it was brilliant whatever it was.

So that's my happy story. Here's one of the many rather less savoury ones my mind has seen fit to remember. I can't actually remember where or when it was - it might have been Ipswich in 1979, 1980, but then again it might not - and me and some mates had gone to see Crass. As was quite often the way for me, primarily due to excessive alcohol consumption, I can't remember the actual gig itself, but I do remember that before we went in some really, really sensible person (typed in a sarcastic tone) had seen fit to shout abuse at a passing Hells Angel. The things people do after one shandy too many eh ☺. Anyway, we went in, saw the bands and then left. The trouble was we were in Ipswich (or wherever), we were drunk, and we didn't have a clue how to get back to the train station. Oh yeah, and we'd been told by someone that a gang of Hells Angels were out looking for punks in order to kick all seven shades of shit out of them. Well if ever you need a cure for drunkenness, I'd suggest using that particular gambit, cos it worked a treat on me. Anyway, employing tactics that would make any commando proud, we somehow managed to eventually locate and sneak back to the train station. The same train station that had seen the last train back to London leave about 10 minutes earlier. For the record, such news is also a brilliant way to aid sobriety ☺. Oh well

I thought, at least we haven't run into any rage-filled, homicidal Hells Angels. And oh, how wrong a person can be. As we lurked in the shadows of the station, we heard what was quite obviously a pack of rage-filled, homicidal Hells Angels driving ever closer on their bikes. Oh shit! Now, to this day I still can't work out why it was there, but just to the side of the station there was a massive square hole (30ft x 30ft perhaps?) in the ground with steps leading down into it. Perhaps it was a storage place or something, who knows and, indeed, who cares? I sure as hell didn't as we scurried into it and all huddled close behind the back of the stairs.

As I've said, I really can't remember when it was that all this took place but I am pretty sure that it must've been in late Autumn or early Winter and thus quite chilly. Well why else would my teeth have been chattering ☺ Anyhow, looking back on it, what followed was straight out of any classic thriller/horror movie. As we sat there in silence we heard the bikes pull up and watched as their headlights partially light up the back wall of the hole. Have I said oh shit yet? Well I'll say it again. Oh shit! Then we heard the bikes being turned off and the sound of boots upon gravel as someone started to walk toward the hole (feel free to add your own "oh shit's" whenever you like). To a man (even the woman who was with us ☺) we all peered up and through the gap between the steps as this person then stood upon the top one.

We all continued to watch as his boots then stood upon the second one. And then the third. And then the fourth. And I'm sure you can probably imagine the tense, suspense inducing musical score that would be playing at this point were this actually a film. And then he stopped. Oh joy! And then said (and I quote) "unless you lot down there have got shooters, you're all dead". Oh bugger, bugger, bugger! And then he just stood there on that infamous fourth step. And we watched. And he stood some more. So we watched some more. And he stood some more again.

The bastard! He'd obviously watched too many classic thriller/horror movies. Which was lucky for us really because he remained true to the script of such movies and, after what seemed like hours to me but was in reality only

a matter of about 30 seconds, he turned and ascended those afore mentioned steps, 3, 2, 1, thus allowing the heroes of the piece (ie., us) to live and fight another day. Or, to put that another way, live to face more possible death threats at Crass gigs. Which I proceeded then to do. But hey, that's another story (although the ending is always basically the same).

I make light of that story now (even though I had to sleep in a bloody telephone box that night after having escaped down the railway tracks in a direction which, fortunately, turned out to be London bound), but I have to say I've never been so scared in all my life. And what's perhaps the most frightening part of it all (and the bit that is often forgotten when people witter on about Crass and "the good old 80's") is that things like that *really* did happen in, during, or after Crass gigs at that time. Or at least the ones I went too. They were fucking scary times. I reckon I've probably been chased about the place by members of every youth sub-culture there are or were ☺. It wasn't fun but hey, where are those Punks, Angels, Skinheads, Mods, members of the general public etc now? Fuck knows, but I bet a lot of 'em now have "proper" haircuts, wear comfy slippers and sensible slacks and can't even vaguely remember why they did what they did, whereas I can (albeit that I know have a slightly modified slant on it). Perhaps that's a clear demonstration of the influence Crass had on me: they helped create the foundation of my political beliefs, and they taught me how to run fast. Cheers ☺.



## MUSIC

### 101ERS "Elgin Avenue Breakdown" LP

During the height of my initial punk obsession in the early '80s, I would pour over the lists of import records for sale in the back of Trouser Press. As much as I loved Flipside and eventually Maximum, Trouser Press connected me most with the music as it was what got me into the mode of mail-order. The fact that many of the articles were written like chimps with typewriters or the fact that they were covering such 'naff bands as Duran Duran didn't matter. In the same way that Starlog had previously fueled my Sci-Fi nerdiness with it's amazing back page adverts for Space 1999 models, Trouser Press was the way I could spend my hard earned cash on ridiculously overpriced singles and LPs.

The Clash were just one of many bands that I felt like I needed everything from. It was never enough to just get "Sandinista". I also needed "Sandinista Now!" and the Hitsville UK/Mikey Dread split. So when this collection of pre-Clash Strummer material of dubious origin appeared, I had to get it.

I think pub rock mostly kinda sucks. It's interesting from a sociological point of view as a precursor to punk and it's fun to pick out the elements that were borrowed or stolen. But it's mostly just shit bar music and the 101ers were more or less quintessential pub rock. But, keeping in mind the manic state in which I ordered this record, I quite enjoy it. "Keys To Your Heart" is just a great almost Motown-esque tune and "Silent Telephone" is also a great moody number. I was also excited to hear their take on "Junco Partner" which was actually one of my least favorite tracks on "Sandinista". The live recordings are not very good, but just good enough for the crazed fan and apparently that means me. Most importantly for this type of boot, it looks really great. Great cover art and cool photos on the back with interesting fan liner notes. If you're a collector like me (and I do hope you're not), this is the kind of thing that's fun to come across.

(Andalucia Records)

### ADICTS, THE "Sound Of Music" LP

I couldn't believe it when the rubbish Tower Records in Honolulu got a copy of the second Adicts album without me having to special order it. Like a lot of folks who got into the second wave of UK punk like I did, the "Punk And Disorderly" LP was crucial. It was like getting the best news you can imagine. Here are those bands you've been reading about and this is what they sound like. It was an instant lesson in what was happening in London and why that town still ruled. One of my favorite tracks on the record was "Straight Jacket" by the Adicts.

Yeah, loved that EP and loved the first album so I was pretty primed for the second LP. Everyone always talks about the sophomore jinx. I don't know. I think it's all perception. If you do a second album that sounds just like the first, you're not challenging yourself. If you do something different, you're selling out or something. I like "Leave Home" and I like "Give 'Em Enough Rope" so I don't know what to say. "Sound of Music" is surely slicker than anything the Adicts had done and there is some acoustic guitar. Even a fiddle. But it's a bunch of great tunes. KTUH used to play "Chinese Takeaway" all the time and when "UK/DK" came out, I couldn't believe how great the band looked performing "Joker In The Pack". Those are still my two favorite songs on the record. But there are a lot of other greats here as well.

The Adicts were never the most important band in England and they weren't about to change the world. But for sheer entertainment value, the first two albums are solid.

### ARMY OF JESUS "Rats In The Walls" 7"

Okay, here is what happens if you don't buy this record. Bad scenario: you miss out on a great Texas hardcore band's debut vinyl featuring Doug who sang for Kids In Service to Satan. Worse scenario: Army of Jesus go on to do many great things and you have to settle for the repress of this record on some larger and less collectible label. Worst case scenario: like so many great contemporary hardcore bands, this could be the only thing they EVER do, it will be gone and you'll be like the sad suckers who didn't get the Little Princess 7" when they had the chance.

(chokecore@yahoo.com)

### BECAUSE, THE / DAUNTLESS ELITE split EP

I mostly like these splits on Snuffy Smiles for the Japanese bands. And I say that as someone from a band that's been on the other end of that equation. The Because are fucking awesome live and they are surprisingly well captured on this little vinyl document. Bright and raw guitars with splashes of melody and chaos, it's like if Leatherface were playing on a speedboat jetting across a dark, evening lake. The rhythm section is powerful propelling the group with ten ton anchors of melody. It's like taking the structure of pop and hopping it up on Yellow Jackets.

The Dauntless Elite are cool. Minimal post-emo pop punk. They are entirely enjoyable and make a decent attempt to keep up with the Because.

(Snuffy Smiles)

### BIG BLACK "You Got It All, Dad! We're Gonna Hit!" LP

This is the notorious live bootleg from I don't remember when. I don't even remember how I got this. Suffice it to say that it's a great sounding live recording and as unhappy as Albini seems to be with bootlegs, the less said that better.

I think a lot of why this boot is so notorious is the cover, which includes the transcriptions of a dozen Black Box recorders moments before impact. Here's my favorite:

Pilot: Harry... we're over!

Captain: Give me the engine!

Tower: Ah, look out!

Pilot: We're over.

(SOUND OF IMPACT)

### BLUE HUMANS, THE "Live - N.Y. 1980" LP

Not only is this record an excellent example of what the great Beaver Harris was doing towards the end of his life, it's one of the only clear examples documented actually combining the '60s avant-garde with experimental electric guitar. There has been so much talk of people like Hendrix jamming with Raheem Roland Kirk, you can only fantasize that that would be like. Today, there are so few possibilities in finding appropriate musicians who wouldn't come off as either self-indulgent or insulting or both to the point of racism.

Formed by ex-Red Transistor guitarist Rudolph Grey, the initial band was a two-piece coming up with No Wave cool kids Mars and DNA. But having seen Tenor great Arthur Doyle on a few occasions and having miraculously secured a one off duo with Harris, the official version of the Blue Humans was born. Seeing as jazz clubs wouldn't book this type of band, they wound up at old stand-bys like CBs and Hurrah. Recorded at the later, this document is crucial in both giving people a chance to see these great players really stretch out in a live situation as well as the groundbreaking and unique meeting between the No Wave guitar skronk and the expressionistic and experimental playing of the true avant-garde. The recording is as good as it needs to be and untitled tracks are complete and distinct thoughts capsulated in accessible segments. (Audible Hiss)

### BUDGET GIRLS "On A Tight Budget" LP

Who has met Christen that didn't love her? She's great. She's the Busy Beaver button girl. She's also 50% of the Budget Girls. There's a bit of a Headcoatees thing going on, as I really don't think the girls play any instruments despite the provocative poses with guitars. In fact, I'm pretty sure that they simply sing their sweet poppy garage punk over the amazing Cee Bee Beaumont even though the credits claim to be the Morton Knights.

Recorded at the legendary Toe Rag in London, this is a great little garage pop platter with really tuneful upbeat songs with euphemistic songs like "We're Tight", "Two-Cheek Sneak" and "Master Cobbler". I know it was never a serious project. But I really hope they someday muster up the energy to do a follow-up LP.

(Damaged Goods)

### CABARET VOLTAIRE "Live YMCA 27/10/79" LP

The so-called industrial scene always fascinated me. Reading about the wild confrontational gigs, the mysterious manifestos and philosophies of the different groups, seeing the often-minimal imagery, it was very appealing in the way someone like Gang of Four was appealing even before you heard them. But most of that world didn't



do much for me once I'd listened to it. Rather than finding something avant-garde, it often sounded either like simple noise and feedback later over-analyzed or rudimentary, non-commercial new wave, which at the time seemed like the complete humiliation of all that was good about punk rock. Only three groups made a real impact for me: SPK, Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire.

Cabaret Voltaire was the least important to me. Maybe it was because they were from Sheffield so it was harder to find info about them. Maybe it's because they didn't have the same sort of communiqués as the other two. I don't know. Maybe it just seemed ridiculous for a bunch of ex-punks to name their group for the birthplace of Da Da.

Once I did begin to explore them, I loved everything I heard. This live album, their second full length, captures everything that seemed urgent about them. The bootleg quality seemed to make it more exciting. The band goes from hypnotic beats to full on charges to wall of noise breakdowns without transition. The mixture of loops and sound collages come together best in the final track "Baader Meinhoff", a tribute to the RAF founding members. The live version of "Nag Nag Nag" is taken beyond any pop format while working within the parameters of the original single from '79. There's also a Velvet's cover though you'd never know it. This record is as important as "Mix-Up" and the early singles in deciphering the band's philosophy.

(Rough Trade)

#### CHRISTIAN DEATH "Only Theatre Of Pain" LP

##### CHRISTIAN DEATH "Deathwish" 12"

I really loved Bauhaus when I first heard them. While I was never a goth, and I think it's worth remembering that Bauhaus were a punk band and existed long before goth, I did like a lot of bands related to that scene. I also liked Alien Sex Fiend and Sex Gang Children. I even dug that first Sisters single for "Anaconda". So, I thought it was really cool reading about how Rikk Agnew of the Adolescents had split to start Christian Death, SoCal's first serious death rock band.

"Only Theatre Of Pain" has an amazing guitar sound. Without using a synth, Agnew finds tones reminiscent of Keith Levine's classic work. What otherwise might have been identified as experimental punk was further obscured by the thick and almost campy vocals by Rozz. The highlight of this totally unique record was the melodic "Romeo's Distress" with its "Kids Of The Blackhole" type guitar work.

What betrays the creepy lyrics and the dark mood of this album is the cover art. The elements are in place but come off more like a Creepy Magazine version of death rock rather than a truly pagan effort. That was conquered on the "Deathwish" 12" released by L'Invitation Au Suicide in France. The eerie face painted on the cover is matched by the insert booklet with more unnerving images.

His last record with the band, Agnew plays some of his heaviest and most inspired guitar parts. With three new versions of tracks from the previous LP including a rocking version of "Romeo's Distress", the title track starts with a huge riff worthy of Sabbath. (Frontier Records, L'Invitation Au Suicide)

#### EPOXIES, THE "Stop The Future" CD

I'm not really sure why I love this group so much. New Wave seems so evil. First wave was the blatant commercial co-opting of punk rock. I guess now that punk rock is about as mainstream and commercial as it can get, even new wave seems like a breath of fresh air at times. The Epoxies are sort of like Rocket From The Crypt where you know at least some of it is a put on. But they love it at the same time. It's ironic and a guilty pleasure all at once.

The second album is a lot better than the first album in a lot of ways. The production is miles better which is great. Good new wave needs a good drum sound and well-recorded vocals. The songs are catchy as hell and standup to anything on the first record. In fact they even further mine areas like the Missing Persons and even Blondie. "It's You" seems like the natural hit. But I'm usually wrong about these things. How can anyone not love this song?

And it's funny. The backing vocals on "Robot Man" are

so, uh, new wave. The record cover even makes me think of "Panorama". I'm really looking forward to their "Eat To The Beat".

(Fat Wreck Chords)

#### GORILLA ANGREG / LOKUM 7"

I got this in Japan of all places. No telling where or when you are ever gonna find Gorilla Angreb stuff, and I'm glad I spent the yen on this EP. By far their best recording, this is a great melodic song that is not so much like the Avengers like everyone claims. They're more like Red Scare (the old Bobbi Brat band, not the '90s group) without the metal tendencies.

Lokum are also a bit of a throwback. They've got a bit of a New Wave Theater vibe that is sort of funny and entertaining at the same time. It's cool. It's fun. But I guess there really isn't anything new under the sun.

(Hjernesind, [hjernesind@hotmail.com](mailto:hjernesind@hotmail.com))

#### IT'S YOU "Iraq" 7"

The new up and coming Crusty Crustofferson's of Japan are It's You. Heavily influenced by the old anarcho stuff from England, the band charge through songs about US foreign policy, religion and more. The funny thing is, the cover art almost looks like an Emo record, all black and white and Dischord like.

It's four solid little hardcore tracks with that weird, squeaky, over-compressed guitar sound that is so characteristic of many Japanese hardcore records. It used to drive me up the wall. Now I think it's cool that they've found something that is almost annoying and are sticking with it. You can't fuck with these lyrics:

Bash Bush

Cheap head

Cheap shit

You are cheaper than shit

I just randomly stumbled onto this record, so grab it if you get the chance.

(Too Circle Records, [www.005.upp.so-net.ne.jp/toocircle/](http://www.005.upp.so-net.ne.jp/toocircle/))

#### MODERN MACHINES / ERGS!, THE split EP

Holy shit! After hearing all the hype, I was sort of expecting some lo-tech, drunk as fuck, loose pile of stinky punk. Instead I get the British Invasion on 45 and it's fucking glorious. Modern Machines and the Ergs! might be the best thing happening in the States at the moment. Everyone else seems to think so. I'm not sure, but this record is pretty damned convincing.

Excellent power pop delivered at 100 mph by both bands, they seal the deal by both producing excellent covers. The Modern Machines do an inspired take on the Hollies "Bus Stop" while the Ergs! have the balls to cover the Beatles "Not A Second Time". It's a lot of fun and the originals are just as enjoyable.

(grateful...)

#### NAPALM DEATH "Scum" LP

##### NAPALM DEATH "From Enslavement To Obliteration" LP

With the exception of a few cool and very different early demos, this is really the only Napalm Death I've ever felt I had to keep hold of. When the hardcore of Brit bands like Icons of Filth and Conflict evolved into the mid to late '80s thrash of bands like Heresy, Concrete Sox and Electro Hippies, there were so many great bands that Napalm Death were just one of a few names. In fact, Concrete Sox were the first to make any sort of name for themselves when the first LP came out and was distributed in the states. It was really exciting. Something new and mysterious was coming out of punk and it wasn't full on metal and it was as ethical as Crass. We were back to the days when you could write to a band and they would write back.

I first came across Napalm Death via their singer, Lee who was doing a half sized fanzine at the time. I remember the last letter I got from him being about how his band was getting busy so he was going to have to stop doing the zine. Next thing you know, "Scum" is in the shelves with a sticker boasting "Debut album by the undisputed World's Fastest Band." Holy shit! From the first moment that the band kicks into overdrive on "Instinct of Survival" I was hooked. I could look past the bad photo selections on the back and even the more appalling collage on the inner sleeve. It didn't even bother me that the bass player and guitarist pictured on the cover don't even play on the first half of the album. Between the brutal

vocals and the seemingly unreal speeds, this is still one of the best records of that era.

The poor eight-track production of the debut was replaced second time around by a much bigger drum and guitar sound. I don't really know if that helped or hindered. The songs had evolved a bit but in no way did they slow down for too long. By this point, journeyman bassist Jim had left (he had previously been an important part of Ripcord) to be replaced by Shane of Unseen Terror. While that band did have some regrettable songs about Garfield and Odie, they also featured former members of Heresy and did help produce "Scum". In fact, at this point Shane is the only member of the "Enslavement" line-up still in Napalm. As good as the record was, the band carried on their tradition of ridiculous poor choices in record covers as this one is a gatefold sleeve that's only purpose seems to be an extended "thanks" list.

After that, Lee split the band. He had done a lot of good, though. After some dates with Def Leppard of all people, he got half of the band to go vegan. For a while, they also distributed anti-rape pamphlets and sort of took on an almost feminist edge. I guess there's nothing wrong with pouring some sugar on Joe Elliot assuming it wasn't filtered with gelatin!

(Earache Records)

#### NATURECORE "With Love..." 12"

Tam was one of my first buddies when I moved to Hollywood. I remember just hanging out at her house with a girl from Conflict, eating spaghetti and just chatting for hours. In all that time, I think I only ever saw Naturecore play once. Seems like they were always in some sort of weird flux. They were great live. I remember her giving me a really great demo tape early on and thinking that they were the most amazing band in California.

Now, I think this record is fine. I like the songs and I can respect the sentiments. I just know that there is a better recording out there somewhere. The vocals aren't as good as the tape I had and the mastering is so totally thin, it sounds like it might have been mastered off of a cassette tape. But I still dig it. "The Box" is still a strong number and shows how far outside the norm the band were reaching in contrast to other anarcho type bands in So Cal that were their peers like A/Solution or Another Destructive System or even Final Conflict. The fast tracks are tight if you want to you can imagine how powerful this material was live in front of a churning audience of black clad freaks.

(No Master's Voice)

#### NAVEL "Depend" CD

Navel took a several year break between albums. But they're back with achingly beautiful guitar-pop that would make everyone from Teenage Fanclub to the Hard-Ons jealous. In fact, I think there is really something in their sound that is like the more melodic elements of the Hard-Ons with early Snuff and the best parts of the Fastbacks. It's really pure and the guitar sound is that impeccable tone that can only come from a Gordon Smith (Snuff to Leatherface to the Pastels to Teenage Fanclub).

There are even some thrashing hardcore breaks here and there. But it's the super pop of miracle songs like "Wish" and "Movie And Moonlight" that really make this record a keeper. The bands doing this kind of music at this caliber in this day and age are few and far between. You would be making a huge mistake to miss out on Navel.

(Snuffy Smile, 4-1-16-201 Daita Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 155-0033 Japan)

#### ORCHIDS, THE "s/t" LP

With the success of the Runaways, official Hollywood creepy guy Kim Fowley decided to put together a new group of teen girls to package and market to America. With the beginnings of punk and new wave starting to make their mark in the States, Fowley decided to take advantage of the media fascination by starting the very, very fake punks Venus and the Razorblades and the fake new wave (and I know that seems like a contradiction in terms) group the Orchids.

Vaguely modeled after Blondie and Pat Benatar, the band isn't even that bad. They've got the same problems the Runaways had. You know what they are mimicking. But they really never make

it all the way. They never really get to where they're heading. The same is true here. But for this kind of band, a catchy pop song can make up for lack of conviction. Hard rock done even a little lackluster sucks ass. Most of it sucks ass anyway. But you can get away with more if you have a good pop song despite some less than confident playing. "Girls", "Bad Guys" and "The Boy Can't Dance" are pretty tuneful and most of the 10 songs have at least one really good hook. I would even say that "Radio Dream" is a respectable homage to the Shangri-Las.

The funniest thing about this record is that it really is just a simple pop rock record trying to be something that it isn't. The photo of the band on the cover, dressed up in Hollywood's idea of new wave, is really funny (jumpsuits and all). I love when they try to include punk imagery with lyrics like "Skinhead bootboys mambo with bread and water fools". What the fuck is that? You can tell a lot from the desperate "thanks" list where they thank Jimmy Pursey and Sham 69, Rodney Bingenheimer and Herman Brood. What's that all about?

(MCA Records)

#### PARTISANS, THE "s/t" LP

#### PARTISANS, THE "The Time Was Right!" LP

Here's another band that I came across during my love affair with the second wave of UK punk. I don't care anymore about the implications or who said what. I love a lot of those early Oi comps my favorite being "Carry On Oi!". The Partisans track was one of my favorites to say nothing of instantly having a teen crush on bass player Louise (reportedly a nanny these days for David Beckham and Posh).

When you really break down the first album, it's pretty generic punk. It's really basic and not the best production meaning it's not big and it's not as raw as you would hope. It's like there was an effort to polish up the band's sound. But it's still a great record largely because of the sloppy and weird performances and the great, rough vocals, unmistakably British. Great songs like "No Time" hold up just as much as the hits "17 Years Of Hell" and "Arms Race". I wonder why "Police Story" was left off of the album?

A few years and a few bass players later, the band moved to London and regrouped with a power pop sound. The studio tracks on "The Time Was Right!" have had a bit of controversy around them as somehow the rough mixes made it to the album and the real version were lost. But the mistake meant a bigger guitar sound and a huge leap in sophistication for the band. The second side of the LP was recorded at a huge anarcho gig at the Brixton Ace with Conflict, Anthrax and more as the band were becoming more interested in the anarcho scene. The board recording is suprisingly full and gives an idea of what the first LP would have sounded like if the band hadn't been rushed. Incidentally, the Conflict set was also recorded and used as the second side of their sophomore LP "Increase The Pressure". The record ends with what is probably the band's best song, "Blind Ambition" which appeared on an interim 7" between the two albums.

(No Future and Link Records)

#### PEAR OF THE WEST "Stupid Game" EP

One of the most interesting bands we've played with in Japan, the curiously named Pear of the West are back with an great three song 7" catching up from where their debut full length left off. Catchy as hell with awesome female vocals, they head more in a Discount direction this time with moments that actually remind me of the catchier stuff on the first Sleeper album. Maybe not in content, but there are similarities in Mami's vocal style with Louise. Great looking cover art too.

(Snuffy Smiles)

#### PEDESTRIANS "Why Kill What's Dead" EP

After knowing these folks for years and hanging out with them every time we go to Chicago, I've finally got a chance to hear their band. Thank fucking God this is a great record. Nothing sucks more than when you meet some really cool people and you become good friends with them only to later find out that their band sucks ass. It's a huge relief that this little 7" totally rocks.

Four songs in all, the band are raw punk that's actually more reminiscent of some of the classic Bay Area '80s stuff than

the more melodic poppier stuff. In fact, this record is a lot like a much better produced version of Sick Pleasure with much more serious lyrics. Jordan even has a bit of that raw vocal rasp that isn't typically rock-n-roll but isn't the hardcore drill sergeant either. Can't wait to hear the album they've just recorded with Stan Signal Lost. (SouthKore Records)

#### PHOTOS, THE "s/t" 2xLP

I loved Blondie from the first moment I saw them on the Midnight Special. I loved every moment of "Parallel Lines" when it came out. I thought they were so smart. I remember needing to find out what "petite ingenue" and "La Dolce Vita" meant. They were so great. I think Johnny Ramone is the only person in the world that didn't love them. The problem was, they only put out one album a year. What do you do for the other 11 months?

That's where bands like The Photos came in. No, they weren't as good as Blondie. But they were definitely good enough. Now, with our much lowered standards and confused history of music, they seem like a pretty great female fronted power pop group. In fact, the simple melodies and fairly unthreatening guitars are a lot like the K-type pop stuff of the '90s like the Crabs or Small Factory. With song titles like "Barbarellas" and "She's Artistic" you know what their trajectory was.

If you're gonna bother to track this one off album down, you might as well keep looking until you get the version that comes with the bonus "Blackmail Tapes" LP. This is some sort of pretty good sounding demo that has a couple of originals and a lot of cover versions from the Beatles, the Stones, etc.

(Epic Records)

#### PRIMITIVE CALCULATORS "s/t" LP + 7"

If you're lucky enough to come across this vinyl, grab it up. It sort of came in under the radar a few years back and now it's impossible to find. Stuart, David, Denise and Frank from Australia were mad, making a beautiful noise very reminiscent of the first few albums from the Ex. With a blast of atonal guitars and hyper, though non-hardcore, speeds, these folks inadvertently rendered groups like Dawson and God Is My Co-Pilot a lot less relevant than we thought. The limited production values give this whole undertaking a strange garage feel. When I say that I mean like they were working like DIY scientists in the garage coming up with something outside of nature. The song titles suggest that they may have even aspired to new wave glory. "Do The Icepick" "I Can't Stop It" If that's the case; we have another happy accident not unlike the first Raincoats LP or the first Flying Spiders album.

The accompanying 7" is actually a much better recording though without surrendering the raw power. The main benefit is that the fantastic vocals become a much more important element adding another dimension to these unknown heroes and heroines of skronk and droll.

(A Slow Drama)

#### PUDDLE, THE "Live At The Teddy Bear Club" LP

The Puddle is one of the great, lost punky bands from New Zealand. I never would have heard this if a couple of the folks at Flying Nun hadn't forced me to buy it when I was visiting them years ago. Nine songs recorded live in less than perfect situations, it's great. I've always loved the philosophy behind the four track recordings that Flying Nun used to get behind. It was almost like documentary filmmaking. You just need to get the information out there in whatever format you can. The drums bleed like crazy. The vocals merely suggest the melody. Ambient noise can often be a lead instrument. These aren't the engineers you expect to see profiled in Tape Op.

But it's great and this live record is the confirmation of a lot of that. The Puddle for the most part wrote catchy pop punk songs much in the vein of the first few singles by the Clean. But their approach was even looser owing something probably to Jonathan Richman or at least the Television Personalities and the Pastels. Live, it's either gonna come across as beautiful pop music as is the case on "Monogamy" and "Give Me All Of Your Clothes" or it's gonna become another kind of animal with the melody de-emphasized in trade for fastness. It's not really that fast or furious. But they're sure trying to get there. It's fun and personal and it's like a bootleg that is really trying and you can't help but cheer for it.

(Flying Nun Records)

#### SILVER SUN "s/t" LP

#### SILVER SUN "Neo Wave" LP

You probably weren't lucky enough to have seen Silver Sun back in the mid-'90s. I was just in the right place at the right time. Fantastic live, these two records should have been the biggest thing since Weezer. But the band never cracked the States and couldn't get to the next level in England. So, like all major label disasters, they went into a long-term hiatus leaving behind two forgotten classics. It seems like there is new life in the camp with a revamped line-up and possible a new album on a smaller label. Hopefully it's not too late for these guys.

The debut album is a real shock. Unbelievable vocal harmonies, huge non-Metal guitar sounds, crisp production on layered on pop tunes that sounded like the Buzzcocks gone Beach Boys. The absurd lyrics of "Lava" are pure pop. They sound good and are as onomatopoeically evocative as literally. It's latent pop genius.

"Neo Wave" came out a year later and furthers their pop formula with huge guitar riffs that come from equal parts "Sheer Heart Attack" era Queen and "Heaven Tonight" era Cheap Trick. "Scarecrow" is pure "Killer Queen" and the opening track is "Auf Wiedersehen". The pure vocal harmonies that they do pull off live are in full display over this whole record. The fact that they squeeze so much music onto the sides makes the mastering a bit iffy in moments. But the dirtiness and bit of mud makes it that much better to me helping cover up the silliness of the ballad-like "Sharks". They even pull off a great rocked out cover of the R&B classic "Too Much, Too Little, Too Late".

(Polydor Ltd.)

#### SNUFF "Six Of One, Half A Dozen Of The Other" 2xCD

When people talk about the most important and influential music of the '90s, they always mention Nirvana, Wu-Tang, Green Day, turntable-ism... But for me, you can't have that kind of discussion without mentioning Snuff. With Brit Pop and everything else raging around them, they were still the best thing to come out of England that decade.

So now they've gotten around to piecing together a double CD, the first half a greatest hits collection and the second half all rarities and b-sides. I can't imagine how these songs got picked. There's such a huge volume of excellent material for either disc, I would hate to have been the person making the editorial cuts.

Of course, the greatest hits side is perfect. No one is going to be completely happy with it as you can't really include everyone's favorite track from the first album. You would have to include the whole thing. That's practically the same for "Reach". In fact, I'm kind of astounded that they didn't include "What Kind Of Love" or "Sweet Dreams". But at the same time, I can't fault a single choice. Later period greats like "Nick Motown" and "Arsehole" are here of course as well as "Martin" and "Whatever Happened To The Likely Lads".

The rarities disc is just as fun with lots of cover versions mostly popping up on tour only flexi's, gig only singles and comps. This whole set is worth it just for the covers of "Don't Fear The Reaper", "You're Wondering Now" and "I Can See Clearly Now". I am so happy this record is out. Is there vinyl?

(Fat Wreck)

#### STALIN, THE "Stalinism" 7"

I'm so happy this record has been officially re-released. So many Stalin bootlegs out there are just so crappy sounding and poorly mastered, it's great to see this five song EP with a nice looking cover and great sound quality.

The Stalin are one of my all time favorite bands and while this record is really early for them (I think it came out just after the first album) I still like it a lot. It's got a lot of the more traditional catchy punk stuff that made up the first flexi along with more hardcore type songs that they would later be known for. The evolution of their sound had something to do with the addition of Tam on guitars who had previously played in the legendary Typhus, the band that would become Gauze.

Out on it's original indie label, Political, this record greatly captures this band right before the leap to the majors.

(Political, no address)

#### TACHYCARDIA "s/t" CD

More Texas noise, and this one is from Wade Driver, one of the best drummers I've ever seen in my life. Imagine if Chuck Biscuits got heavy into Han Bennink and Sunny Murray. This improvised disc also features Walter Daniels (Jack O' Fire) and Carl Smith. These guys can fuckin' play and you get a broad spectrum of new sounds introduced to the avant-garde improvisational field with harmonicas, whistles, bugles and a nose flute (Rahsaan?). It's a serious workout and you've gotta spend some time with it. It was a bit much for me to soak up first time through. The length of the improvisations are staggering and tangents get fully explored. But spend a day with it and it's a really rewarding experience.

(Pecan Crazy Records, blackbolt23503@yahoo.com)

#### URCHIN, THE "Versus Brand New Equalizer" CDEP

The Urchin are so totally amazing. They are incredible performers, which they never get enough credit for. This record best showcases their playing ability as well as the range of their songwriting. From the first blast of Propagandhi hardcore to the uncanny Rites of Spring riffs to the classic Dillinger 4 melodies, this is an unbelievable self-released EP. There are even moments that are like Gorilla Biscuits or "The Crew" era 7 Seconds. Someone should really put this out as a 7" in the States. I was lucky enough to get to see them play each song every night for a week live, but this CD still blows me away.

(Urchin, 5-33-201 Kamikitazawa, Setagaya-ku Tokyo, 156-0057 Japan)

#### ZERO FAST "Fifth Street/Some Little Hope" CDEP

Is there really a Fifth Street anywhere in Yokohama? I don't know. I don't even know if there is a Go Street. It's a cute lyrical idea that works for this cute little pop song. Ferocious live, the band is nicely restrained on this record putting the melody forward. Japanese do pop punk better than anyone else in the world. The first track is a sweet almost Pixies like pop tune. The second one has its roots more in '77 punk with its classic Stiff Little Fingers influenced guitar progression. There's a bit of the Business as well. But from I know about Japan today that probably has as much to do with Hard Skin as any old school Oi!

(Anti-New Waves Records, [haga@cj8.so-net.ne.jp](mailto:haga@cj8.so-net.ne.jp))

#### V/A "Anti-War: Anarcho-Punk Compilation Vol. 1" CD

Sean McGhee has been a huge help to me in finding old anarcho to interview for my book on anarcho punk. His first compilation on Overground of classic anarcho-punk is an amazing overview of British punk and how truly varied it was for a time.

On the one hand you've got the more traditionally punk sounding groups like DIRT, Instigators, Omega Tribe, etc. But you also get the country folk punk of the hugely underrated Astronauts. You get the quasi new wave of Youth In Asia. Of course, you get the melodic yet indefinable music Zounds and Flowers In The Dustbin.

Twenty-three bands in all with a little info on each, this is the Time-Life equivalent of the anarcho days. It's all classic stuff. I can't wait for the next two volumes.

(Overground Records)

#### V/A "The Bastards Can't Dance" CD

I don't know if you remember this, but a while back Snuffy Smiles used to do these cool little tribute 7"s to Snuff. Now Yoichi has assembled this tribute to Leatherface with the best of what Japan has to offer today.

I was really surprised that the bands chose to cover a variety of records. I guess I've always assumed that everyone thought that "Mush" was Leatherface's best album by a mile. Instead you've got really interesting reworkings from most of the group's catalog making me rethink the band's later stuff.

Real standouts include Spraypaint, I Excuse, The Because and Drift Age's interesting take on "Baked Potato" that merges in and out of Jawbreaker's "Busy". This is a cool little fun project. (Snuffy Smile, 4-1-16-201 Daita, Setagaya-ku Tokyo 155-0033 Japan)

## FILM AND TELEVISION

#### ALL ABOUT LILY CHOU-CHOU (dir. by Shunji Iwai)

This is a better manifestation of a William Gibson-esque world than any actual Gibson screenplay. Showing the conflicts arising between human and post-human adolescence, the violent world of early teens in rural Japan is given an unusual critique not only deconstructing the social growth patterns between kids over time but also showing how traditional preconceptions of youth hierarchy are complicated by cyber space.

The title is a beautiful and irresistible misdirection. There's really nothing about Lily in this film. We know she's a pop star sort of like a more goth Bjork. Sounds like it too. But she is merely the figurehead of a cyber society of teenagers where information is King and feelings can be scrutinized and objectified thoughtlessly.

The story is about kids. The film follows the high school years of Yuichi (Hayato Ichihara) and Shusuke (Shugo Oshinari). Yuichi is the closest to a protagonist. He is the leader of a chat room dedicated to Lily fans in his township. With everyone logging on anonymously, whatever your class ranking in the real world is erased. That's good for Yuichi who is constantly victimized, first by older bullies who humiliate him in his early teens in front of his friends in an excruciating scene. He befriends the young Shusuke who is new to their school. A naïve bond is made between the two during a sleepover. The awkward communication between the two is cripplingly real as two kids suffering from different stages of alienation and self-consciousness.

Through a series of situations, sort of a Truffaut on meth ride, they steal the money to have a nice vacation for their small crew of friends. If the film wasn't surreal enough with it's over-stylized camera work and it's hyper-real phantom pop star, the trip to Okinawa goes over the edge. While enticed by the sirens disguised as bicycle riding female escorts, the trip is one to the world of death. A car accident kills an island eccentric that has been popping up along their trip. The kids respond differently from excitement to indifference. Relaxing with the girls on the beach lead to vaguely metaphysical discussions. The trip ends but not after Shusuke nearly drowns. But when they get back to school, the formerly bookish Shusuke turns the tables on the bullies, beating and humiliating them in equally crude ways. He in turn takes over their position now dominating the school. Rather than that starting a new regime, he takes over violently victimizing Yuichi and his peers.

It's hard to say whether the drowning was an epiphany or not. One of the things that is the most striking and jarring thing about the film is that the violence all seems so arbitrary. Even when you ascribe an action to the lamest notions of jealousy or hormones, it fades away as you realize the violence and rewards aren't even particularly interesting for anyone. Only the victims are ever genuinely affected.

Life in this world is even crueler for the girls. Yuichi loves Yoko (Ayumi Ito), a gifted musician. But the arbitrary and petty jealousies of some of the girl cliques leads to her abuse and eventual self-abuse as her only refuge. Another friend of Yuichi's is Shiori (Yu Aoi). But after finding incriminating photos of her, Shusuke blackmails her, forcing into prostitution. Her one shot at freedom is through death. She claims it as a beautiful celebration.

There are a lot of ways to look at this film as overdone hipster-ism. Director Iwai also the hugely popular and equally brilliant "Swallowtail". The kid stars have pretty cool resumes as well. Hayato Ichihara starred in "Juon: The Curse 2" and "Onmyoji 2". Shugo Oshinari was in "Blue Spring", "Battle Royale II" and at least one of those "Tomie" flicks. Ayumi Ito was in "Dr. Akagi" and "Hana To Alice", Iwai's latest feature. Yu Aoi also stars in "Hana To Alice".

Anyway, you can enjoy the film on a lot of different levels. It's pretty dense. You can get into the global shift in how we see adolescent relationships and identities as affected by the cyber world. You can be haunted by the awkwardness of an encapsulated but violent society still unable to communicate simple ideas like telling the boy you have a crush on. You can also just let the almost obnoxiously vivid images wash over you art instillation of artificial light.



(Home Vision Ent.)

BRIEF CROSSING (dir. by Catherine Breillat)

ANATOMY OF HELL (dir. by Catherine Breillat)

I've sung the praises of Catherine Breillat before with films like "Romance" and "Fat Girl". Her post-modern analysis of sex can be distilled into the basic idea that if all actions are political, then by default all sex is also political. With that theme, she has scrutinized sexuality and sexual relationships with a Marxist fervor often losing road weary observers along the way. Perhaps that is the reason why two of her most recent films have been so simplified in set and structure.

"Brief Crossing" tells the story of a thirty-something English woman who meets a teen French boy on a ferry ride across the Channel. Fraught with sexual tension, Breillat replaces natural flirtation with barbed and at times confrontational dialog. Like most of her films, you don't often hear what you expect or want to hear. This puts the focus on the awkwardness of seduction and in this particular case changes the roles of many of her early films. The woman is the seducer but using traditionally male modes.

Breillat has been banned time and time again for her graphic displays of sex and this film isn't much different. The lack of fanfare, shot on location with what feels like natural lighting (a huge part of that is the amazing cinematography from Eric Gautier of "Irma Vep" fame) doesn't have the voyeuristic feel of most Hollywood soft porn. It's almost hyper-voyeuristic as you feel like you're intruding. To further that feeling, the film captures young actor Gilles Guillain first real sexual encounter. The blushing on his chest and body are real.

"Anatomy Of Hell" isn't the, uh, light fare of "Brief Crossing". This time, sexuality and in particular, sexual parts are a metaphor for existential emptiness. Sartre was an artist and a Marxist and here Breillat bravely straddles that line.

A gay man saves a woman when he witnesses her slash her wrists in a nightclub. A challenging and complex conversation follows in what you can probably start to call Breillatian discourse. Breaking out of the introductory conversation, the woman drops to her knees giving the man a blow-job in public. His surprise and his orgasm is where the film really starts.

The two make a business deal. She will pay him to watch her at her most "unwatchable". This includes displaying for him her splayed genitalia and having him penetrate her with a finger while she's having her period. He describes her vagina at "the horror of Nothingness that is the imprescribable All." That's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sartre much to De Beauvoir's chagrin.

Both films are shot like plays and inevitably could be categorized as mysteries. These aren't movies that simply ask questions without giving answers. But instead, it leaves you with many possible answers. The fact that her movies are constantly attacked and ridiculed by critics and filmgoers of the most banal taste says she's doing something right. I don't know that you can actually review films like this, as there really is no context. They're challenging and often very, very smart and otherwise personal. As a result, I'm completely drawn to these films without being able to honestly say I get it. How many Marxists can say they completely understand Das Kapital?

I used to complain that movies like Breillat's were wrongly compared to other recent French films of similar controversy like "Irreversible" or "Baise-Moi". But with "Anatomy of Hell" there is a real comparison to be made with the later. World famous porn star Rocco Siffredi stars in this film and is surprisingly excellent not unlike the late Karen Lancaume.

(Wellspring Media and Tla Entertainment)

DANGER! 50,000 VOLTS! (dir. by Matt Gillbe and Mike Griffiths)

If you're like me, you've got a special place in your heart for Nick Frost. Aside from being a genuinely kind and friendly guy, he's got some of the funniest moments in "Spaced" and "Shaun of the Dead". Giving him his own show was just a matter of time and as host of a somewhat tongue-in-cheek series of safety documentaries, your fan-dom will know no bounds.

With actual experts as guests and properly researched facts, the show comes off somewhere between "Fishing With

John" and, and I hate to use such an obvious Brit reference, the first few "Ali G" shows. The difference is, you feel that Nick is just being himself. You can't believe that any of it is scripted and he's genuinely interested in what his guests have to say. Nothing mean-spirited and condescending here.

Over this double disc set that covers the entire first season, he explains to the viewer how to survive everything from a kidnapping to hippo attack to bat wielding thugs. Interspersed are equally hilarious animated vignettes dubbed "Too Dangerous To Film" such as "Forest Fire!", "Avalanche!" and "Lightning". The flash style is funniest enough just for the artist renditions of Frost.

Two things make this a sure winner. First of all, he uses to determine what is the most fearsome arachnid is the funniest thing I've seen this year. Second, the DVD comes with the bonus feature "Danger! 50,000 Zombies!" where Frost re-teams with "Spaced"/"Shaun" co-star Simon Pegg in the only episode that's a complete spoof. Also, look for the Easter Egg with the blooper reel. (Princess Productions)

WONDERFALLS (dir. by Todd Holland)

It's getting to the point where if a show with an interesting premise gets cancelled in it's first season, you should check it out when the DVD shows up as you've probably got a better chance of finding a gem than actually watching TV. "Wonderfalls" is an excellent example of that.

I had never even heard of the show when the DVD box set popped up. I probably wouldn't have even checked it out if a random assortment of people didn't start recommending it to me. Now, several months later, I've finally had the time and I am devastated.

This was such a sweet, sweet show, it breaks my heart that it never got a chance. TV viewers are as stupid as TV execs. TV is dead. With shows like this and "Freaks and Geeks" and "Undeclared" and "Sports Night" all getting killed off, why would any smart, talented person want to dedicate any creativity to the format?

Jaye Tyler is a young college grad who is stuck in her hometown at Niagra Falls working at a crappy souvenir shop. Everyone knows that retail sucks and customers suck and this is one of the few shows to actually show that doing the bare minimum at work can be an intellectual endeavor. Though the reason is never totally clear, inanimate animals (a wax lion, a monkey statue, a very cute stuffed donkey) start talking to her in vague cryptic messages.

From there each episode becomes a mystery. In her varying attempts to do what the animals tell her to do, it isn't until the end of the episode where the complete truth unravels and it's as satisfying as a Sherlock Holmes story. In one episode, the animals keep telling her "Bring her home" and the final chapter will bring you to tears. It's really that good.

The whole cast is amazing. Caroline Dhavernas plays Jaye and in a perfect world she would be a superstar as she's combines some of the best elements of Parker Posey with Mary-Louise Parker. Katie Finneran is amazing as her loving, Republican, lawyer, closet lesbian, sister. Lee Pace is hilarious as her dead-beat, grad student, live at home, older brother. William Sadler is her kind, right wing, Dad and Diana Scarwid is her travel book author, secretly left wing, Mom.

A good cast is key to why this show is so powerful. The writing is sophisticated enough that only certain types of versatile actors could do it. For the most part, you are rolling along laughing at the witty dialog when suddenly something happens and you're sobbing into your tater tots (I like to eat lunch when I'm watching a series).

It really is a crime that this show got the axe. Four episodes and it was gone. Fox is run by morons. There are rumors of a feature film. What we really need are two or three more seasons. (Fox Home Entertainment)

**I COULD NEVER TAKE THE PLACE OF YOUR MAN**

It was only last June  
When her old man ran away  
She couldn't stop crying  
'Cause she knew he was gone 2 stay  
It was 10:35 on a lonely friday night  
She was standin' by the bar  
Hmm, she was lookin' alright, yeah

I asked if she wanted 2 dance  
And she said all she wanted was a good man  
And wanted 2 know  
If I thought I was qualified, yeah

And I said, baby don't waste your time  
I know what's on your mind  
I may be qualified 4 a one night stand  
But I could never take the place of your man

It hurt me so bad when she told me  
With tears in her eyes (Tears in her eyes)  
He was all she ever had  
And now she wanted 2 die  
He left her with a baby  
And another one on the way  
She couldn't stop cryin'  
Cause she knew he was gone 2 stay

She asked me if we could be friends  
And I said, oh, honey baby that's a dead end  
U know and I know  
That we wouldn't be satisfied

And I said, baby don't waste your time  
I know what's on your mind  
U wouldn't be satisfied with a one night stand  
And I could never take the place of your man